Different Values but Similar Backgrounds: How Relativism Influences Naïve Realism in Everyday Disagreements

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University of Pittsburgh, 2020

A functioning society requires that people work together and cooperate with each other, even when people hold opposing viewpoints. Yet, Americans today find themselves in intractable disagreements and conflicts. This study investigates whether moral, epistemic, and situational relativism predicts reactions to everyday disagreements. First, we investigated whether moral, epistemic, and situational relativism can be measured and distinguished from one another as three dimensions that are empirically separate and reliable. Second, we delved into how each of these three facets relate to naïve realism and judgments of people with opposing views. Findings suggested that our proposed instrument of moral, epistemic, and situational relativism is distinct, valid, and reliable. Further, these three types of relativism significantly predicted reactions to disagreement. While moral and epistemic relativism were associated with less hostility toward those with opposing views, situational relativism was surprisingly associated with more hostility toward those who held opposing views. There is a growing importance of understanding disagreement across a broad range of topics and potential ways to mitigate hostility due to differences in viewpoints. The present study offers important insights for creating future socially constructive behavioral interventions to target conflicts exacerbated by disagreement.

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1.0 Introduction

"Difference must be not merely tolerated, but seen as a fund of necessary polarities between which our creativity can spark like a dialectic. Only then does the necessity for interdependency become unthreatening." – Audre Lorde

A functioning society requires that people work together and cooperate with each other, even when people hold opposing viewpoints. Yet, Americans today find themselves in intractable disagreements and conflicts – from whether Black lives matter (Alba, 2020; Parker et al., 2020; Pew Research Center, 2020a), to whether people should wear face coverings during a global pandemic (Lizza & Lippman, 2020; Montanaro, 2020; Pew Research Center, 2020b; Tierney, 2020), and even to accepting the results of the 2020 U.S. Presidential Election (Fandos & Cochrane, 2020). On the whole, the U.S. is more polarized today than at any point in its recent history (Pew Research Center, 2014, 2019a), and signs of social harmony and common ground within politics are few and far between (Pew Research Center, 2017; Peters, 2018).

While disagreement can be a catalyst for compromise and negotiation (Fisher et al., 2011), American society's most pressing issues have become the most complex and the most disagreed upon, leading to many civic and legislative standstills (Abramowitz & McCoy, 2019; Abrams, 2019; Knowles & Tropp, 2018; Pew Research Center, 2014; Rauch, 2016). Further, this bleak U.S. political landscape often engenders polarization, partisan intransigence, negative affect towards political opponents, and even the potential for political instability which can lead to political violence (Davis, 2019; Goldstone et al., 2010; Kalmoe & Mason, 2018). Given that this political conflict is in and of itself destructive and is further related to increased economic inequality, less political trust, and less ability to govern (Hetherington & Rudolph, 2015; McConnell et al., 2018),

the need for a foundation in which people can understand others in socially constructive ways is more pressing now than ever before.

Although there are many reasons for the increasing disagreement in the U.S. today, one contributor is the tendency for people to view their own stances as superior to the views of people who disagree, even when issues are seemingly noncontroversial (Skitka et al., 2005; Skitka, 2010; Skitka et al., 2015; Van Prooijen & Krouwel, 2020). This tendency often leads people to judge those who disagree with them as significantly more biased than themselves or members of their own groups (Ditto et al., 2019; Pronin et al., 2002; Pronin et al., 2004). This is in line with the people's propensities to believe their perceptions of reality are objective — when they are in fact subjective (Gilovich & Ross, 2016; Schwalbe et al., 2020). This tendency to mistake subjectivity for objectivity is known as *naïve realism*. Naïve realism facilitates inferences that those who disagree must be either irrational, uninformed, or at worst, immoral, and sometimes all three (Griffin & Ross, 1991; Nisbett & Ross, 1980; Robinson et al., 1995; Ross & Ward, 1996; Ross et al., 1977; Ward et al., 1997). Taken together, people are inclined to overemphasize disposition and minimize situational constraints when making judgments of others, especially when they hold opposing viewpoints (Gilbert & Malone, 1995; Harman, 1999; Jones, 1990; Jones & Davis, 1965).

Given that negative dispositional attributions hinder being able to judge a person even-handedly, it is imperative to investigate the ways people approach opposing viewpoints to positively counteract the negative downstream consequences of naïve realism. As such, we posit

that and empirically test whether relativism[1] is a predictor of naïve realism. While people are often naïvely realistic in everyday situations, there are also instances where, despite differences in opinion or the existence of long-term conflicts, people are able to compromise or bridge divides (Čehajić-Clancy & Bilewicz, 2017, 2020). Of course, disagreements and conflicts are not inevitable, but the need to understand novel predictors of what drives people to work together despite holding opposing viewpoints is critical, especially in times where democracy itself is on the line.

Therefore, we posit that relativism, as developed in the philosophy and anthropology literature (Hall & Raimi, 2018; Herskovitz, 1955; Hollis & Lukes, 1982; Nussbaum, 1997; Wilson, 1970), is 1) an empirically novel way to understand how people perceive others with opposing viewpoints, and further, 2) a predictor of why people make either hostile or benign judgments of opposing others vis-à-vis naïve realism. In the present work, we propose to create an instrument to measure three distinguishable types of relativism: moral, epistemic, and situational. We suggest that people make harsh or benign judgments of others based on how they view another person's viewpoints as morally, factually, and situationally valid. Further, we provide empirical support that moral, epistemic, and situational relativism each distinctly predict naïve realism, operationalized holistically across a broad range of hypothetical disagreements.

We argue that people not only judge those who disagree with them, but that this tendency may be stronger in some rather than others. For those for whom reacting in naïve realistic ways is

[1] Relativism is broadly defined as "the view that truth and falsity, right and wrong, standards of reasoning, and procedures of justification are products of differing conventions and frameworks of assessment and that their authority is confined to the context giving rise to them" (Gowans, 2012, p. 1).

not as pronounced a tendency, it is possible that relativistic (as opposed to absolutist) ways of thinking both 1) exist within people and 2) predict less (as opposed to more) harsh and swift judgments of those with opposing viewpoints. Further, these three facets of relativism, as they relate to morality, epistemology, and situationism, may themselves relate to one another in how they shape a person's individual judgments of those who disagree with them.

The present study has two aims.[2] First, it will seek to understand how moral, epistemic, and situational relativism can be measured and distinguished from one another as three dimensions that are empirically separable and reliable. Second, it will explore how each of these three facets predict naïve realism, as defined holistically by reactions to disagreement with others on several topics, namely apolitical, taboo, moral, and political issues. In the following sections, we will briefly review the social psychological literature on naïve realism (Griffin & Ross, 1991; Nisbett & Ross, 1980; Robinson et al., 1995; Ross & Ward, 1996; Ross et al., 1977; Ward et al., 1997). Next, we will present support for the idea that there are multiple and distinguishable facets of relativism, and that these constructs are viable in the ways people interpret the world and more importantly, interpret disagreements and people who hold disparate views. We will then present a

[2] We conducted this study in late March of 2020 after COVID-19 had been declared a pandemic (WHO, 2020). Given this, we also included a priming condition to investigate whether contextual cues — namely emphasizing U.S. political partisanship or a public health issue, COVID-19 — influenced how these three facets differentially relate to naïve realism. We believed priming COVID-19 would reduce relativism across the board while priming U.S. political partisanship would increase it. However, this prime did not moderate the relationships between moral, epistemic, and situational relativism and naïve realism. Thus, because we found that there was no difference in how participants responded across the two conditions, we collapsed these two conditions and do not explore this further in the present study.

study that sought to 1) create and validate an instrument of moral, epistemic, and situational relativism and 2) determine whether it predicts naïve realism in disagreement contexts. Finally, we will discuss additional considerations for future research, limitations, and broader impacts of the proposed work.

1.1 When Naïve Realism Thrives and Divides

All experience, even physical reality, is constructed and inherently subjective, yet people believe that their experience of reality is correct in all contexts (i.e., Gilovich & Ross, 2016). People can build an imperfect, yet reliable, consensus about what the physical world looks, smells, sounds, feels, and even tastes like (barring sensory impairments). However, building a collective consensus around how the social world – composed of complex everyday social and political issues and perspectives – is much more challenging to do. This is because our interpretations about the social world are largely socially constructed with others in our immediate environments (Gilovich & Ross, 2016; Schwalbe et al., 2020; Sherif, 1935; Shibutani, 2017; Van Kleef et al., 2019).

This difficulty in escaping our own perspective when it comes to social and political opinions contributes to our conviction that our own perceptions (including our priorities, beliefs, and preferences) are objective and rational. Further, because perceptions of the world are objective to the eye of the beholder, people tend to believe that others who share their rationality must also hold similar perceptions to our own. Disagreements can thus contribute to an "us versus them" mentality at the interpersonal and group levels, which has the potential to sow division, distrust,

and conflict between those with opposing viewpoints (Ehrlinger et al., 2005; Schwalbe et al., 2020; Westwood et al., 2018).

Needless to say, this lack of confidence and trust in people with opposing viewpoints is well-documented in many aspects of everyday life in the U.S., both in-person and online (Pew Research Center, 2014). People actively avoid discussing their social and political viewpoints with family members (Chen & Rohla, 2018; Sutherland, 2018), relocate to areas where others are ideologically similar (Motyl et al., 2014), and perpetuate cycles of enmity and intolerance for opposing viewpoints on social media (Pew Research Center, 2014; Yang et al., 2017). Often, this lack of confidence that feeds into nonconstructive interactions creates further divisions that reinforce an unwillingness to work together toward a common goal. In fact, they often perpetuate increased social and political polarization, which subsequently feeds back into distrusting those with opposing views, creating a vicious cycle (Pew Research Center, 2014; Rossini, 2020, Sunstein; 2018).

1.2 Proposing Relativism as a Predictor of Naïve Realism

Previous research has explored how people's moral convictions, ability to process evidentiary information despite group identity, and beliefs in the potential inaccuracy of their knowledge all influence their viewpoints on complex issues (i.e., moral convictions, self-integrity vis-à-vis self-affirmation, intellectual humility; Binning et al., 2015; Krumrei-Mancuso & Rouse, 2016; Porter & Schumann, 2018; Skitka et al., 2005). Moral and epistemic relativism were theoretically popularized in philosophy beginning in the 19th century. However, very little research has sought to identify, validate, and empirically distinguish moral and epistemic relativism, let

alone an additional facet we propose — situational relativism — as measurable drivers of naïve realism. The logic of relativism follows that people ought not to be judged for differences in opinion because the locus of control is not dispositional, but rather, due to the external context that informs what is virtuous and good. We thus propose that acknowledging the moral, epistemic, and situational validity in differing beliefs predicts fewer hostile judgements of those with opposing views, especially for topics that may not have a cut and dry answer.

There are some aspects of reality that, for the most part, are agreed upon universals — for instance, that gravity exists and that water is wet — that the present research thus circumvents. However, many issues and ideas in today's contemporary society are not as objective. For example, disagreements on societal issues can stem from how much security versus freedom a society ought to implement, how much non-governmental actors and groups with power ought to have government oversight, and how much involvement, if any, should be exercised in direct response to international conflicts, to name a few (Farrell & Newman, 2019; Pew Research Center, 2016, 2019b). For these issues and others like them, people may hold viewpoints that emphasize and prioritize different aspects of the same issue, yielding differences in opinion. As such, the ways in which these different aspects may feel crucial – and more importantly, objective to individual people – can differ from person to person. It is these instances, where people feel their own viewpoints are akin to the fact that gravity exists or that water is wet, that create the conditions under which naïve realism thrives and divides. We argue that especially in these instances — wherein an inherently subjective viewpoint feels to its perceiver to be an objective truth — that interactions and dialogues between people who disagree on a social or political issue may benefit from relativistic thinking in that interaction. There may be something about viewing the world in

relativistic terms that may alleviate the often-automatic tendencies to judge those with differing opinions harshly due to naïve realism.

While much social psychological research has explored the psychological processes and downstream consequences that follow a disagreement (e.g., Gilovich & Ross, 2016; Griffin & Ross, 1991; Nisbett & Ross, 1980; Robinson et al., 1995; Ross & Ward, 1996; Ross et al., 1977; Schwalbe et al., 2020; Ward et al., 1997), other fields like philosophy and cultural anthropology have theoretically explored reasons for why thoughts and beliefs are seen as being relative to experience (e.g., Boas, 1982; Geertz, 1993; Herskovitz, 1955; Hollis & Lukes, 1982; Nussbaum, 1997; Wilson, 1970). Further, some of this work has explored how these thoughts and beliefs may be relative to a particular standpoint (i.e., specific contexts, culture), and thus may constitute greater tolerance of ideas and beliefs that deviate from one's own. Thus, if relativism is said to increase tolerance for viewpoints deviating from one's own, then logic follows that it may also relate to less naïve realism in disagreements.

1.2.1 Moral Relativism

Although there are various forms of relativism, perhaps the most popular is *moral relativism*. Moral relativism posits that moral judgments are relative to a particular reference point, such as cultural moral norms for what constitutes right and wrong (Corradetti, 2009; Hollis & Lukes, 1982; Gowans, 2012; Kellenberger, 2010; Lukes, 2008; Nussbaum, 1997; Wilson, 1970). Further, it suggests that these reference points depend on contextual factors (e.g., believing what is morally bad in one context, like stealing, is morally good in another context – such as if stealing serves the purpose of preventing oneself and one's loved ones from going hungry). Moral relativism thus surmises that contexts, cultures, and groups are diverse (Boas, 1982; Geertz, 1993;

Herskovits, 1955), and thus viewpoints within a given context are no better, morally speaking, than other viewpoints outside of that context, culture, or group.

Although critics of moral relativism say it is untenable due to its boundary conditions and potential to justify immoral and even heinous acts (Rachels, 2009; Rai & Holyoak, 2013; Young & Durwin, 2013), its proponents posit that there are instances where relativism is tenable and serve as a way to promote and increase tolerance (Corradetti, 2009; Feyerabend, 1978; Haidt, 2007; Harman, 1975; MacIntyre, 2013; Rai & Fiske, 2011). Thus, although we focus this paper on the potential benefits of relativism in reducing naïve realism, we also caution that there may be a dark side to relativism, which we discuss further when considering topical domains and boundary conditions of relativism, and when it may be more socially constructive to be absolutist.

Even though moral judgments may be made in contexts with a clear moral answer, it may especially thrive in instances of moral ambiguity. Perhaps the most popular example of how our moral priorities yield differing beliefs or actions is in the trolley problem – a thought experiment wherein there is a runaway trolley headed down railway tracks (Figure 1; Hacker-Wright, 2019). On the main track there are five people who are tied to the track and are thus unable to move, and the person in the thought experiment is said to be off to the side by a lever that, if pulled, will switch the train to another set of tracks. However, on this second set of tracks, there is one person who is also tied to the tracks and is unable to move. The dilemma then becomes whether it is more ethical to do nothing and let five people die on the main track, or to pull the lever and divert the trolley onto the second track to save five people, but kill the one person on the side track in the process.

The trolley problem has been previously described as pitting two schools of moral thought against the other – utilitarianism versus deontology (Greene et al., 2001); however, it also stands

to reason that people's differing moral priorities will yield disagreements with others who value a different moral school of thought (or its elements) over the other. Thus, moral relativism (versus absolutism) can provide tolerance of those with differing moral views – and ultimately contribute to mitigating naive realism.

1.2.2 Epistemic Relativism

Similarly, *epistemic relativism* is the idea that knowledge is relative to a particular reference point, such as a culture or social context, and that this dictates what is factually right or wrong (Boghossian 2006; Carter, 2019; Goldman, 2010; Williams, 2007). It should be noted that there are varying degrees through which epistemic relativism is debated to operate. At one extreme, facts and values are interchangeable and all judgments, including factual judgments, are subject to relativistic thinking (Carter, 2019; Yalcin, 2011). At the other extreme, epistemic relativism becomes epistemic nihilism, wherein people deny that facts and knowledge are inherently false and unattainable. Further, those who believe that facts and knowledge are not real may further believe that only they know what is true. This is known as *gnosticism* — the belief that knowledge is based on personal experience or perception. In this way, people perceive their own knowledge as fundamentally correct in all circumstances, even in the face of evidence to the contrary (Moore, n.d.). Taken together, the first extreme that all matters of life are subject to relativistic thinking, including those based on factual evidence, likely leads to less naïve realism in contexts of disagreement; the second extreme, believing that only one knows the truth in all contexts, likely leads to greater naïve realism.

In between these extremes is a middle ground wherein we situate the present work. The moderate position on epistemic relativism is that there is an important distinction between factual

and value judgments — where factual judgments are provable and objective and value judgments only pertain to inherently subjective beliefs and values that have no inherently correct answer (Boghossian, 2001; Carter, 2016; Seidel, 2014). Thus, we argue that epistemic relativism is most useful and socially constructive when it operates in this middle ground (as opposed to either extremes presented above), and when it is within the context of value (as opposed to factual) judgments. Further, we argue that the moderate approach, wherein people are relativistic about topics that are nuanced and subject to value (as opposed to factual) judgments, is ultimately related to less naïve realism.

We illustrate this in Figure 2 where people may view the same object yet interpret it in different ways. When extended to the social and political world we inhabit, differing aspects of the same experience or topic may become present and inherent, where epistemically the "right" answer of a situation may depend on what stands out in a situation and how contexts have shaped our previous knowledge. When it comes to naïve realism, those who hold differing viewpoints may be seen negatively, but we posit that epistemic relativism (in the moderate sense) tempers this tendency.

1.2.3 Situational Relativism

Finally, both moral and epistemic relativism depend largely on a given situational vantage point. We define *situational relativism* as the ways in which people take a given situation or context into account when making judgments of people based on their views and actions, especially when these views and actions differ from one's own. The importance of contexts and situations when judging and attributing beliefs and behaviors is a staple of social psychology. While people tend to assume the worst of those who act differently from themselves (i.e., the

fundamental attribution error, also see correspondence bias; Gilbert & Malone, 1995; Harman, 1999; Jones & Davis, 1965; Jones & Harris, 1967; Ross, 1977), people are dually capable of making situational attributions for themselves and members of their ingroups, often giving them "the benefit of the doubt."

Thus, we posit that if people can look to situations and contexts as a contributor of behavior and thoughts, then it follows that contexts may shape value judgments in instances where people disagree with each other as well. For instance, the same symbol can be interpreted in different ways depending on what is visually attended to in an image (Figure 3). The middle character of the image could be interpreted as a "B" when read horizontally, but as a "13" when read vertically. Despite the image itself being static, our interpretation of the middle character is influenced by what we attend to in the context of the image itself.

Although it is easier to alternate between both visual interpretations, this becomes harder to do when replacing the visual with subjective interpretation of complex issues. Despite living in a world where (dis)agreement is often not about visual images but rather about complex sociopolitical issues, the influence of situations on people's lived experiences and social contexts may have just as much, if not more, of an influence on whether their viewpoints are, in essence, a "B," a "13," or another interpretation entirely. Situations, such as upbringing and neighborhood contexts – and the social norms they provide – can influence how people view the world (Fiske et al., 1998; Markus & Kitayama, 2003; Ross, 1977). Further, taking the unique situations and contexts of those with opposing views into account can be related to less negative assumptions of those who think differently in their beliefs or views.

We posit that these multiple ways of viewing the world morally, epistemically, and situationally, although not exhaustive, relate to naïve realism and reactions to disagreement by

influencing assumptions of others' (im)morality, (un)informedness, and (ir)rationality in a holistic manner. Given that disagreements in our society often lead to destructive standstills and even active harm (Abramowitz & McCoy, 2019; Abrams, 2019; Knowles & Tropp, 2018; Pew Research Center, 2014; Rauch, 2016; Schwartz, 2020), reducing hostility and immediate assumptions that others who disagree are immoral, uninformed, and or irrational may require people to see the differing person in a relativistic way – morally, epistemically, and situationally.

1.3 The Present Study

This study has two aims and seeks to measure and evaluate how each type of relativism most effectively reduces naïve realism. First, it aims to develop and validate an instrument of relativism and its theorized distinguishable components – moral, epistemic, and situational. Second, it will explore how moral, epistemic, and situational relativism each distinctly relate to naïve realism as defined by reactions to disagreement with others on apolitical (i.e., audiovisual stimuli), taboo, moral, and political issues and operationalized holistically. This study therefore seeks to address the following research questions:

RQ1: Are moral, epistemic, and situational relativism distinguishable, valid, and reliable constructs?

RQ2: How do moral, epistemic, and situational relativism distinctly predict naïve realism, as defined by disagreements on apolitical, taboo, moral, and political topics?

Hypotheses[3]

H1: Moral, epistemic, and situational relativism will be valid, reliable, and related yet distinguishable facets of our overall construct of relativism.

H2: Moral, epistemic, and situational relativism will each distinctly predict naïve realism. Higher moral, epistemic, and situational relativism will each uniquely reduce naïve realism and hostility towards people with opposing views.

[3] These hypotheses were preregistered on Open Science Framework and can be found at osf.io/vfp8j (Conrique & Binning; 2020).

2.0 Methods

2.1 Participants

Three-hundred and thirty-seven U.S. participants were recruited from Prolific, an online survey platform, in late March of 2020. Thirteen participants were excluded from data analysis due to incomplete data, missing an attention check question, and/or if they indicated they had issues with our survey. The remaining 324 participants (51% womxn, 48% men, 1% non-binary) were between 18 to 76 years of age (M age = 36.25, SD =13.53). The sample identified as predominantly White (80%), followed by Asian or Asian American (8%), Latinx/a/o/e (6%), Black or African American (3%), and Native American (3%). Political self-identification was reported on a 7-point scale anchored by *extremely liberal* to *extremely conservative*. The sample identified as 14% extremely liberal, 21% very liberal, 14% somewhat liberal, 7% neither liberal nor conservative, 22% somewhat conservative, 15% very conservative, and 7% extremely conservative. Participants also indicated they were Democrats (48%), Republicans (45%), or Independents (4%).

2.2 Procedure

Participants were asked to complete a survey on mindsets and social life. Participants first encountered a blurb about the study on the Prolific platform, along with the average compensation amount. If they chose to participate, participants then were taken to a consent page with

information on the study, a statement on the confidential and voluntary nature of the study, and the researchers' contact information. After consenting to the study, participants were presented with counterbalanced blocks of items aiming to measure moral, epistemic, and situational relativism. Blocks were counterbalanced evenly to ensure the ordering of the items did not influence responses on subsequent items. Following this, participants were asked for their personal beliefs and reactions to disagreement on various apolitical, taboo, moral, and political issues. These were randomized within-subjects to decrease order effects. After these questions, participants were asked to complete additional questions to assess need for closure, intellectual humility, and perspective-taking (further detailed below) in order to assess discriminant validity of our proposed relativism instrument. At the end of the survey, we asked demographic and attention check questions.

2.2.1 Need for Closure (NFC)

Given time constraints, NFC was assessed using the abridged 15-item Need for Closure Scale (NFCS-revised; Roets & Van Hiel, 2011). While this abridged version is not as comprehensive as the original Webster and Kruglanski (1994) 42-item NFC scale, both the NFCS-revised and the original NFC have comparable psychometric properties that suggest the NFCS-revised is an empirically valid version. Items (i.e., *I feel irritated when one person disagrees with what everyone else in a group believes*) were rated on a 7-point scale (1= *strongly disagree* to 7= *strongly agree)* and were averaged to create a NFC composite after reverse-coding negatively worded items. Higher scores indicate higher need for closure ($\alpha = .73$; $M = 3.26$, $SD = .81$).

2.2.2 Intellectual Humility (IH)

IH was assessed using the 9-item instrument developed by Porter and Schumann (2018). Items (i.e., *I am willing to admit it if I don't know something*) were rated on a 7-point scale (1= *strongly disagree* to 7= *strongly agree)* and were averaged to create an IH composite after reverse-coding negatively worded items. Higher scores indicate higher intellectual humility (α = .76; M = 5.13, SD = .79).

2.2.3 Perspective Taking (PT)

PT was assessed using the 7 perspective-taking items from the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (Davis, 1983). Items (i.e., *I sometimes find it difficult to see things from another person's point of view*) were rated on a 7-point scale (1= *strongly disagree* to 7= *strongly agree)* and were averaged to create an IH composite after reverse-coding negatively worded items. Higher scores indicate higher perspective taking (α = .84; M = 5.06, SD = .97).

2.3 Predictor Variables

2.3.1 Moral, Epistemic, and Situational Relativism

This work constitutes the third study in the scale development process; two previous studies had been conducted prior to the present research primarily providing support for epistemic relativism on an older version of a Relativist-Absolutist Mindset (RAM) scale. The present study

expands on previous work by not only expanding and refining scale items to measure epistemic RAM, but further differentiating between two additional elements of relativism: moral and situational RAM (i.e., RAM-M and RAM-S, respectively). As such, 38 original items were developed for this study to capture moral, epistemic, and situational relativism. These updated items consisted of 12 moral relativism items (RAM-M; i.e., *There is often more than one ethical viewpoint that is valid in a given situation*), 14 epistemic relativism items (RAM-E; i.e., *It is justified for multiple people to have differing viewpoints on the same topic*), and 14 situational relativism items (RAM-S; i.e., *It is important to understand differing viewpoints by appreciating the ways people's ways of life differ*). We created these updated RAM items based on considerable literature review and reflecting on whether the items had good face and content validity. These 38 items were anchored on a 7-point scale (1= *strongly disagree* to 7= *strongly agree)* and were inclusive of negatively and positively worded phrases. Higher RAM scores indicate higher relativism (lower absolutism), while lower scores indicate lower relativism (higher absolutism).

2.3.1.1 Assessing Content and Discriminant Validity

These items were assessed for content validity by examining the philosophy literature to ensure we included the central aspects for each type of relativism in our instrument items. The literature suggested that relativism could be largely broken down by moral and epistemic relativism – and that underlying both, yet also possibly distinct, was a dimension of situational relativism. Thus, items were created specific to these three proposed dimensions of RAM.

To determine the extent to which the RAM items were distinct from other related theoretical concepts, we checked correlations of the RAM subscales with other theoretically and conceptually-related instruments (i.e., Need for Closure, Intellectual Humility, Perspective Taking) to ensure they were not overwhelmingly correlated (i.e., all correlations $r \geq 0.5$). In other

words, correlations that are lower than 0.5 suggest that the construct is distinguishable from other established and related constructs in psychology.[4] Further, temporal stability of all potentially related constructs was held constant by measuring them within the same study. Discriminant validity correlations from various existing instrument are contained within Table 1.

2.3.2 Naïve Realism

Naïve realism was operationalized as participants' holistic reactions to disagreement with a hypothetical person who held opposing views, an operationalization we developed in previous iterations of research. First, participants were asked to evaluate a series of apolitical, taboo, moral, and political topics – ranging from audiovisual stimuli, views on the existence of a higher being, deontological versus utilitarian moral dilemmas, and views on climate change, to name a few. Each block consisted of three different apolitical, taboo, moral, political examples, respectively. Participants were asked to indicate their views on each of these examples and the extent to which they could understand the opposing viewpoint. Using this information, the survey was set up to then ask participants to imagine a hypothetical person who disagreed with them (using the opposite

[4] In addition to examining correlations, we ran exploratory regression models to explore whether RAM-M, RAM-E, and RAM-S predicted Naïve Realism above and beyond Need for Closure, Intellectual Humility, and Perspective Taking (as well as Political Ideology). These findings suggested that the three RAM subscales significantly and uniquely predict Naïve Realism even after including Need for Closure, Intellectual Humility, Perspective Taking, and Political Ideology in the model. Given that the model held above and beyond Need for Closure, Intellectual Humility, Perspective Taking, and Political Ideology, as shown in Table 5, this provided further confidence that RAM-M, RAM-E, and RAM-S uniquely predict Naïve Realism.

response to the one they had indicated to be their own viewpoint). Further, we asked participants to rate the extent they perceived the opposing person to be 1) irrational, 2) uninformed, and 3) immoral for their differing viewpoints on each of the twelve topics. Responses were anchored by *extremely [irrational/uninformed/immoral]* (1) to *extremely [rational/informed/moral]* (7). Prior to analyses, participants' raw ratings of the hypothetical opposing person were reverse-coded to instead have higher scores reflect higher naïve realism. These ratings were averaged within each of the four topics to create four naïve realism subcomposites, collapsing across their ratings of the hypothetical opposing person's (ir)rationality, (un)informedness, and (im)morality, to reflect apolitical (α = .87), taboo (α = .77), moral (α = .90), and political (*a*=.84) naïve realism. These subcomposites were later used as indicator variables to represent the latent variable of naïve realism (to answer **RQ2**). We also created a larger naïve realism composite encompassing all of these four topics (α = .91).

3.0 Results

3.1 Data Analytic Strategy

To address **RQ1**, "Are moral, epistemic, and situational relativism distinguishable, valid, and reliable constructs?" we conducted item response theory (IRT) analysis. The IRT analysis allowed us to test the RAM instrument's basic psychometric properties – namely each item's difficulty (b_i ; i.e., how well participant ability levels are captured by each item) and item discrimination (a_i ; i.e., how well choosing different response options on each item captures these varying difficulty levels for each participant). This allowed us to understand which items sufficiently distinguished between people with low, moderate, and high relativism across the three subscales (i.e., moral, epistemic, and situational). Ultimately, the goal for the IRT analyses in the present work was to pick the top six items per subset to comprise the new RAM instrument, made up of moral, epistemic, and situational items.

To answer **RQ2**, "How do moral, epistemic, and situational relativism distinctly predict naïve realism as defined by disagreements on apolitical, taboo, moral, and political topics?" maximum likelihood estimation with robust standard errors in EQS (Version 6; Bentler, 2007) was used to estimate the main hypothesized latent measurement model. Additionally, we tested all possible permutations of mediation and moderation models examining the associations of each subscale (i.e., RAM-M, RAM-E, RAM-S) with naïve realism.

3.2 RAM Scale Development and Validation

3.2.1 Assessing Psychometric Properties

All item parameters are displayed in Table 2. Items were first fit to a 2-parameter logistic (2PL) model using R to assess both item difficulty (b_i) and item discriminability (a_i). We then plotted item characteristic curves (ICCs; Figures 4-43). Finally, we tested the fit of the 2PL model and estimated ability scores to determine convergent validity of the RAM instrument. Six items from each of the moral, epistemic, and situational RAM subsets exhibited a reasonable span across the trait range (as suggested by item difficulty parameters) and sufficient discrimination parameters. On the other hand, items were dropped if they had low discriminability (e.g., ≤ 0.5) and the distributions for each item's difficulty parameters were excessively unevenly distributed and/or skewed. As an additional check, these six items for each of the RAM-M, RAM-E, and RAM-S subscales and eighteen items total were subjected to an exploratory factor analysis to examine the overall factor structure of the eighteen RAM items. More information on the factor loadings for each item from this EFA is in Table 3.[5]

Finally, we assessed reliability for each of the moral, epistemic, and situational RAM subscales and the entire eighteen-item composite. Cronbach alphas for the overall RAM instrument and broken down by subscale are all above 0.80, which suggests they all have good internal

[5] For this EFA, the factors were allowed to correlate since they are theorized to be related to the more latent construct of relativism. The scale fit a three-dimensional model with factor loadings of at least 0.55, except for one item in the RAM-E subscale with a value of 0.53.

consistency. Examining the correlations between subscales did not suggest any multicollinearity issues. All reliability, means, and inter-correlations are listed in Table 1. Based on this and as suggested in the following section, the reliability and validity of the scale was deemed strong enough to be a predictive instrument of the three proposed facets of relativism that are they distinct, measurable, and related to one another, supporting **H1**.

3.3 Testing Moral, Epistemic, and Situational Relativism Predicting Naïve Realism

3.3.1 Model Fit

Robust methods were used to buffer against nonnormal distribution of the data, given that often data in psychology are hard to specify (Bentler, 1995). CFI values greater than .90 was used as the cutoff to reflect acceptable fit. SRMR and RMSEA values lower than .08 indicate good fit and were used as well (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kline, 2015; Marsh et al., 2004). Even though chi-square tests and degrees of freedom are sensitive to sample size, the Satorra-Bentler (SB) chi-square value was also used. In all estimated latent models, satisfactory fit was determined when all of the fit indices were in the ranges presented above. The hypothesized model was tested using post hoc modification indices to ascertain which paths the data suggest are not necessary and which omitted paths the data indicate ought to be included. Thus, a Lagrange multiplier (LM) test to add parameters and a Wald test for dropping parameters were requested from EQS in the data output. Fit indices for our hypothesized model are presented in Table 4.

This model included paths from each of the relativism factors (moral, epistemic, and situational relativism) to naïve realism (represented as one latent variable that contained four

observed variables: the composites of reactions to disagreement on apolitical, taboo, moral, and political topics). Estimates for factor correlation between relativism and naïve realism were included. This model also covaried the relativism factors to account for the associations between them. Within each of the latent variables to represent moral, epistemic, and situational relativism, our observed variables comprising RAM-M, RAM-E, and RAM-S were partially disaggregated. In other words, each latent variable was composed of three 2-item composites to represent our observed variables. Furthermore, the first composite for each of the three factors had its variance set to 1. This main model produced a significant SB chi-square value, SB $\chi 2$ (59) = 112.11, $p < .001$ but alternate indices suggested acceptable fit: CFI = .96, RMSEA = .05 (90% CI = .04, .07), average absolute standardized residual = .03 (largest residuals = .21, -.11, .11).

As alluded to earlier, LM and Wald tests were used to ascertain if and where the model was misspecified. The LM test helps determine whether an unspecified path from one factor to another would improve model fit. The LM test in this instance suggested that an indicator variable we hypothesized belonged in the RAM-S latent factor might fit better as an indicator variable in the RAM-E latent factor, $\chi 2$ change = 3.26, p = .001. However, given the strong correlation between the RAM-E and RAM-S factors (r=.58) and our a priori theorized and hypothesized latent factors being supported by IRT analyses, we decided to retain our hypothesized model. On the other hand, the Wald test did not suggest we should drop any parameters.

3.3.2 Analyses of Path Estimates

The observed estimates of the model are illustrated in Figure 44. The estimates are significant at the conventional $p < .05$ level. First, all factors of relativism — moral, epistemic, and situational—were significantly related to each other as expected given previous EFA and IRT

analyses. Also as expected, moral, epistemic, and situational relativism all differentially predicted naïve realism. These three factors collectively explained 22% of the variance in naïve realism. Epistemic relativism was the strongest predictor of naïve realism (B = -.45), t = -3.29, p < .05, followed by situational relativism (B = .32), t = 2.02, p < .05, and moral relativism (B = -.31), t = -2.50, p < .05.

In summary, stronger beliefs that it is justified to have varying knowledge beliefs on the same topic was related to less negative judgments of others in contexts of disagreement. Similarly, stronger personal beliefs that morality is relative was related to less negative judgments of others who disagree with oneself. Surprisingly, however, stronger beliefs that viewpoints are shaped by the ways people's ways of life differ was related to more negative judgments of others in contexts of disagreement. Although this finding was not hypothesized from the outset, further reflection on why epistemic and moral relativism predicted less harsh reactions to disagreement but situational relativism predicted harsher reactions to disagreement is further discussed below. Thus, **H2** was partially supported.

3.3.3 Testing Alternative Models

Alternative models were tested using maximum likelihood to ascertain that the chosen model above had the best fit, relative to less parsimonious models in which there are one exogenous and two mediator predictors (for all three possible permutations of this) or two exogenous and one mediator predictors (again, for all three possible permutations of this). These six alternative models (Figures 45-50) were assessed and had varying degrees of freedom, with some (but not all) fitting the data sufficiently. In the three models that had two mediators being predicted by one exogenous predictor, the mediators' errors were covaried. The fit indices

presented in Table 4 suggested that none of the alternative models were a better fit to the data than the hypothesized model (and thus did not seem to suggest a mediational story either), especially given that our chosen model is the most parsimonious and fits well.

Given that EQS does not have features to test for interactions with latent variables (Bentler, 1995), we tested for interactions between moral, epistemic, and situational relativism using our non-latent variables in multiple regression. We saw no hints of interactions between our three relativism constructs (Table 6). Thus, our exploration of alternative models increases confidence that the three facets of relativism each predict naïve realism exogenously, directly, and distinctly.

4.0 Discussion

The current U.S. political landscape motivated much of the current work in further understanding methods to reduce naïve realism. Many in the U.S., especially political partisans, disagree on a range of issues that have remarkably become polarized over the last few decades – from gun policies, to rights for womxn, the LGBTQIA+ community, immigrants, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, and even to mask-wearing during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Given the importance of further understanding disagreement across a broad range of topics and potential ways to mitigate hostility due to differences in viewpoints, the present study examined how a novel measure of relativism related to naïve realism and tendencies to judge others harshly. Understanding this link can prove important for creating future socially responsible behavioral interventions to target conflicts exacerbated by disagreement.

The present study found that moral, epistemic, and situational relativism, comprising the larger construct of relativism in which this work is largely embedded, appears to be a distinct, valid, and reliable construct as operationalized by our 18-item RAM instrument. These findings suggest that people are mindful that differing moral, epistemic, and situational vantage points can yield differences in opinions and views, and that these elements of relativism are further associated with one another. Additionally, moral and epistemic relativism, operationalized by the validated RAM instrument, were related to less naïve realism—operationalized holistically by harsh reactions to disagreement across a range of topics. Rather surprisingly, situational relativism was related to higher naïve realism.

Our findings that moral and epistemic relativism were related to less harsh reactions to disagreement support the current philosophical literature. Moral relativism has been theorized to

increase tolerance in situations where someone disagrees with the moral actions of an actor – yet does not feel compelled to intervene, especially if the actor appeared to be well-informed and rational when behaving in that way (Wong, 1984). Further, epistemic relativism assumes that there are multiple valid knowledge systems based on differing contexts, and that these can be incompatible yet equally valid (Boghossian 2006; Carter, 2019; Williams, 2007). Thus, these ideas that the actions or beliefs of those with whom we disagree can be justified given differing, yet valid systems of moral and epistemic frameworks support our findings in the present work. Higher moral and epistemic relativism as we have conceptualized it appears to promote tolerance and the idea that the world is not black and white, but rather, different shades of gray – and thus judgments of those with differing views need not be chastised.

However, our findings also suggest that when the situations or contexts themselves from which one's beliefs stem become salient, these same situations highlight the situational differences in which people have developed, revised, and reinforced their views. While the philosophical literature does not make many assumptions about relativism solely from the vantage point of social contexts or situations, cultural anthropological work posits about cultural relativism that differing views and actions are valid given the existence of differing about cultures and norms within these contexts (Boas, 1982; Geertz, 1993; Herskovits, 1955). Given the unexpected nature of this finding, we explore it further in the section below.

4.1 The Paradox of Situations and Situational Relativism

Despite originally theorizing that all three facets of relativism – moral, epistemic, and situational – would be related to lower naïve realism, situational relativism itself may emphasize

a vantage point from which people become more judgmental of opposing viewpoints. This was a surprising finding given work emphasizing that contextualizing people's behavior can reduce negative dispositional attributions (Gilbert & Malone, 1995; Harman, 1999; Jones & Davis, 1965; Jones & Harris, 1967; Ross, 1977). While additional research is in order to ensure this finding is not spurious, the present work suggests that acknowledging the social contexts in which people's views are rooted can be destructive in contexts of disagreement wherein people's *value judgments* are involved. While this certainly warrants further exploration, it also suggests an important implication on the nature of situational relativism: Emphasizing differences between people's opposing views vis-à-vis their situational contexts may further emphasize the ways in which people's contextual and situational realities – albeit subjective, fluid, and malleable on a minute-by-minute basis – can also become intractably static and different from others' situations in the long-term. Despite the flexibility of situations and contexts, being mindful of the influence of other people's upbringing and cultures in disagreements may actually highlight the ways people are different. In other words, differing backgrounds and contexts may paradoxically be seen as immutably different features of people.

Future research should further investigate whether emphasizing different "cultural values" and situations is not be a useful method to reducing naïve realism. Additionally, future research should explore whether less harsh judgments requires people to 1) share similar backgrounds or cultures to reduce negative judgments of others in everyday disagreements, or 2) have a willingness to look past differences in people's situational and cultural backgrounds more broadly when disagreeing. Future interventions should consider the potentially destructive effect of situational relativism when creating applications to reduce conflicts involving value judgments.

4.2 Additional Theoretical Considerations

The present research begs the question, "can relativism always promote good?" Although we situated the present work within the intellectual framework of using relativism as a tool for mitigating naïve realism, we also cautioned earlier about the potential dark side to relativism. Although we did not consider this empirically in the present work, we can ascertain confidently that relativism does break down when principles of justice are not foundational and agreed on by all within a given society (Rawls, 1971). In other words, treating people with dignity and respect is one of the basic preconditions of a just society. When these preconditions are not in place or are themselves the subject of disagreements, then relativism can reinforce harmful systems that go against these principles. Thus, we discuss boundary conditions, topical domains, and other theoretical and contextual factors that inform when and how relativism may either be beneficial or detrimental to constructive social progress.

4.2.1 Considering Boundary Conditions and Topical Domains of Relativism in Context

While our findings suggested that at least two facets of relativism – moral and epistemic – were associated with less harsh judgments of disagreeing others, an important consideration is that relativism may inadvertently become problematic in our increasingly polarized and (mis)(dis)information-ridden society (Lapowsky, 2018; Office of the Director of National Intelligence, 2017; Toropin et al., 2020). Given fake news' stronghold in the U.S. (Grieco, 2017), its ability to intensify social conflict (Zeitzoff, 2017), undermine faith in the democratic process (Dale, 2020), deter constructive dialogue (Bennett & Livingston, 2018; Toropin et al., 2020), and reduce social cooperation (Frenkel et al., 2020; Mezzofiore et al., 2020), the question then becomes

not *how* to use relativism to promote people being able to see eye-to-eye but *when* and *why* to use relativism. While there are many reasons in today's polarized society to consider this, one is that of malevolent actors who intend to deceive the general public and have more access now than ever before to spread disinformation quickly and readily. Conspiracy theories have been levied at astonishingly dangerous rates in recent history, including among our own government's leadership (see QAnon conspiracy theory, disinformation about COVID-19 – to name a couple; Buckley, 2015; Dale, 2020; Keith, 2020; Lewis, 2020; Stolberg & Weiland; Wood et al., 2012).

The threat of fake news to sow conflict and further entrench people in their own views has critical implications for how we trust others and have dialogues about sociopolitical issues that affect us all and often spark disagreements. Our constructions of reality have always been inherently subjective and thus subject to faults. However, it is increasingly difficult to construct a reliable, albeit subjective, reality in a world where falsehoods are shared swiftly and merge with empirical and scientific fact – ultimately promoting a bankrupt and insidious view of reality capable of causing real harm to society. In this sense then, being relativistic about falsehoods promoted by malevolent actors intended to create conflict and discredit the democratic process, is not entirely helpful. Some topics and issues require people to live in a shared reality for oneself and the greater good, especially in contexts when the greater good is at risk.

4.2.2 When Being Absolutist is Better for the Greater Good

This work's underlying motivations were to understand, for the sake of social harmony, how people understand opposing viewpoints as being shaped by ways of knowing morally, epistemically, and situationally. One important factor is then critically thinking about what how relativism may inadvertently impede responsible and equitable *social progress*, especially in

relation to sociopolitical conflicts and disagreements. The following questions set up an important thought experiment in this regard: When two people are engaged in a disagreement about a sociopolitical issue in an ever-increasingly politicized society, is social progress illustrated by these people willingly engaging with each other in a civil way even if no one's views are moved? Or is it illustrated by actual change in viewpoints? Further, does promoting uniformity in opinion across society constitute social change – or rather – is it being able to live in social harmony among diversity in thought that constitutes social progress? In considering this thought experiment, an important aspect of this work is considering what role relativism may play (and is capable of playing) in achieving any one of these goals, and more importantly, which of these goals is worth promoting for the greater good.

Taking this a step further and as highlighted in the past year alone, there remains much inequity in the U.S. (CDC, 2020; NPR, 2020b; Saenz & Sparks, 2020; Schaeffer, 2020). When it comes to being relativistic, we must then be critical of the ways relativism can promote further harm rather than good. This becomes especially true when many disagreements concern matters of racism, sexism and misogyny, ableism, homophobia, transphobia, immigrant rights, and public health—to name a few. The 2020 U.S. Presidential Election alone says as much – when one side has attempted to sow doubt in the democratic process and has largely exhibited authoritarian tendencies in its rule (Dilanian & Memoli, 2020; Fandos & Cochrane, 2020; Shear, 2020), allowing the actions of these actors and refusing to speak up against them is in and of itself harmful. When it comes to protecting people or even the fabric of a dwindling democracy, it is not constructive to echo the sentiment that there are "very fine people on both sides." Failing to speak up against the actions of those who have authority and power is what allows nefarious people and beliefs to succeed (Albright, 2018; Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018; Snyder, 2017). Ultimately,

recognizing different moral, epistemic and situational vantage points can create a danger of maintaining a harmful and oppressive status quo that actively hurts people and democratic systems through our collective actions and inactions.

Given that our work aims to bridge societal conflicts constructively, considering "for whom are we bridging conflicts?" becomes a critical component of this work. If the answer to this question ultimately reinforces systems of disenfranchisement and oppression, then we must critically re-think our promotion of relativism in these instances. In other words, being absolutist (rather than relativist) about the importance of avoiding harm to others becomes critical in situations where people's human rights are at stake and being debated.[6]

4.3 Limitations and Future Directions

While this research contributes to the existing literature by providing support for a novel theoretical construct of relativism and its relation to naïve realism, this work is not without limitations. First, although the RAM instrument's content and empirical (i.e., discriminant, convergent, concurrent, and predictive) validity was good, the instrument itself could have been further improved if the items to measure moral, epistemic, and situational relativism had been additionally assessed by interdisciplinary experts (e.g., in philosophy) and by participants from the

[6] In some cases, there are parallels between relativism taken to the extreme and the adage, "qui tacet consentire videtur," which means that those who are silent in times they could have spoken up are taken to agree. Although it is beyond the scope of the present research, further nuanced consideration of the specific contexts and conditions that may benefit from absolutism (over relativism) is in order.

general population for extra reassurance of the instrument's face validity. Further, although IRT is considered a rigorous analysis for scale development and validation, further scale validation should be conducted iteratively with additional validity and psychometric checks over the span of a longer period of time to ensure that poorly functioning items are replaced with better items and validated.

Second, this work was done with a predominantly WEIRD sample. Our findings could have been more generalizable if we had more Black, Indigenous, and People of Color participants within the U.S., given that most of the sample was White. Further, the data may only present a sliver of how relativism influences naïve realism in disagreement contexts. Individualism is emphasized heavily within the U.S. context, and thus independence and dispositions are highly valued. On the other hand, collectivism emphasizes interdependence and collectivistic cultural values (Nisbett et al., 2001; Varnum et al., 2010). Collectivists are also more likely to make situational (rather than dispositional) attributions when making judgments of others. Thus, we have yet to explore relativism within collectivistic contexts where situations are already placed at a higher importance. Future research should examine whether situational relativism similarly yields greater hostility towards those with opposing views, or whether situational relativism within collectivistic cultures in turn mitigates this hostility. Further, future research should explore how moral and epistemic relativism predict naïve realism within collectivistic cultures.

Third, we operationalized naïve realism holistically as reactions to disagreement on apolitical, taboo, moral, and political topics. However, we did not distinguish between the different elements of our operationalization of naïve realism. There may be something key about what topics it is constructive to be relativistic about versus absolutist. Future research should thus break down these different facets of naïve realism as we have operationalized it and explore how relativism predicts naïve realism separately by apolitical, taboo, moral, and political topics. Additionally,

specifications should be made on how (in)consequential disagreements about certain topics are to further understand when it is more beneficial to be relativistic versus absolutist about specific categories of issues and the issues themselves. Further, it is imperative to explore whether there are instances where relativism no longer predicts naïve realism — with particular attention to contexts where there is little to no ambiguity about the moral, epistemic, or situational validity of people's beliefs or actions.

4.4 Conclusion

Ultimately, we live in context within a society that requires cooperation, even while maintaining differing viewpoints. Despite people holding differing viewpoints, we must be able to coexist and cooperate constructively. Yet, we often make judgments about other people specifically because of their viewpoints. In fostering a cooperative and constructive society, we need to be able to use our differences and our disagreements as a tool to help us become better members of society. Disagreement should open the door to conversation and progress and not close it. Yet, the judgments we make that others are irrational, uninformed, immoral – and worse – often closes this door. We must then find ways to both open the door despite differences in opinion and keep it open for future conversations that are civil, societally constructive, and equitable. Only in this way can our dependence on each other, our livelihoods, our safety and well-being – for the sake of ourselves and our democracy – truly become unthreatening and achievable through our individual and collective efforts and commitment to a better world.

Appendix A Tables

Table 1 Scale Reliabilities, Means, Standard Deviations, and Pearson Intercorrelation Matrix

Scale	α	M	SD	RAM (entire scale)	RAM-M (subscale)	RAM-E (subscale)	RAM-S (subscale)	Need for Closure	Intellectual Humility	Perspective Taking	Naïve Realism
RAM (entire scale)	0.89	5.18	0.75	1	.788**	.812**	.791**	-.439**	.284**	.449**	-.290**
RAM-M (subscale)	0.84	4.73	1.09	.788**	1	.389**	.403**	-.235**	0.073	.227**	-.284**
RAM-E (subscale)	0.83	5.33	0.95	.812**	.389**	1	.580**	-.475**	.321**	.473**	-.281**
RAM-S (subscale)	0.86	5.50	0.8	.791**	.403**	.580**	1	-.367**	.328**	.406**	-0.101
Need for Closure	0.73	3.26	0.81	-.439**	-.235**	-.475**	-.367**	1	-.599**	-.694**	.154**
Intellectual Humility	0.76	5.13	0.79	.284**	0.073	.321**	.328**	-.599**	1	.620**	-0.072
Perspective Taking	0.84	5.06	0.97	.449**	.227**	.473**	.406**	-.694**	.620**	1	-.153**
Naïve Realism	0.91	4.24	0.71	-.290**	-.284**	-.281**	-0.101	.154**	-0.072	-.153**	1

Note: ** p <.01

Table 2 Item Response Theory Parameter Estimates for the RAM Scale

Item	*a*	*b1*	*b2*	*b3*
RAM-E1	0.80	-0.91	0.29	1.50
RAM-E2	0.60	0.04	-0.08	1.90
RAM-E3	1.74	-2.27	-0.76	0.43
RAM-E4	0.15	-5.53	0.82	4.40
RAM-E5	0.91	-2.33	0.37	1.41
RAM-E6	1.21	-1.43	-0.45	1.09
RAM-E7	1.26	-2.43	0.08	1.01
RAM-E8	0.40	-0.15	-2.56	-1.17
RAM-E9	0.35	-0.75	2.64	3.03
RAM-E10	0.48	-1.52	0.70	3.04
RAM-E11	1.88	-1.88	-0.47	0.93
RAM-E12	0.52	-0.35	0.79	2.16
RAM-E13	0.89	-1.45	0.50	1.36
RAM-E14	0.64	-1.62	-0.38	3.45
RAM-M1	0.45	-0.12	2.55	2.83
RAM-M2	0.64	-2.38	1.03	2.18
RAM-M3	1.20	-2.98	0.56	1.77
RAM-M4	0.26	3.22	8.27	3.73
RAM-M5	0.15	5.81	-3.68	3.05
RAM-M6	0.34	-3.17	3.40	2.53
RAM-M7	0.54	-0.62	1.43	2.88
RAM-M8	0.75	-0.95	0.41	1.41
RAM-M9	0.73	-0.43	0.55	2.28
RAM-M10	0.73	-2.38	0.39	1.99
RAM-M11	0.23	-0.71	6.83	0.62
RAM-M12	0.49	-0.47	0.97	1.53
RAM-S1	0.49	-2.56	1.27	2.12
RAM-S2	1.97	-3.57	-1.33	-0.08
RAM-S3	1.26	-1.72	0.19	1.57
RAM-S4	1.08	-1.38	0.15	1.46
RAM-S5	0.10	4.39	-3.83	0.97
RAM-S6	0.31	1.40	3.68	3.83
RAM-S7	1.06	-2.27	-0.96	0.49
RAM-S8	1.24	-2.90	-0.78	0.96
RAM-S9	1.75	-2.60	-1.48	-0.22
RAM-S10	1.40	-2.64	-0.01	1.16
RAM-S11	0.61	-2.01	1.76	3.04
RAM-S12	0.42	-0.52	-1.05	2.28
RAM-S13	0.36	-3.04	3.22	3.27
RAM-S14	1.79	-2.18	-0.18	1.1

Table 3 RAM Scale Items

Variable	Item	Factor score
RAM_E3	Being open to different viewpoints is beneficial.	0.80
RAM_E6	It is justified for multiple people to have differing viewpoints on the same topic.	0.76
RAM_E7	Others' viewpoints are valid even if they're different than my own.	0.70
RAM_E11	There are many reasonable ways to view the world.	0.68
RAM_E12	I am not one to judge what other people's preferences or viewpoints are.	0.64
RAM_E13	One person's opinion is as valid as another person's.	0.53
RAM_M1	There is no absolute standard in morality.	0.77
RAM_M2	People's moral judgments are influenced by personal feelings, tastes, or opinions and these should vary between people.	0.73
RAM_M3	There is often more than one ethical viewpoint that is valid in a given situation.	0.71
RAM_M7	Moral rules are dependent upon the traditions and practices of a person or group of people.	0.68
RAM_M8	What is morally good in one context may be morally bad in another.	0.66
RAM_M9	Morality is relative to many things, like cultural standards.	0.62
RAM_S2	People's beliefs are context-dependent, in the sense that their way of life helps explain why people hold the beliefs they do.	0.79
RAM_S3	We can understand differing viewpoints fairly by considering the situations out of which they arise.	0.76
RAM_S4	One reason why people hold differing beliefs is because different situations contribute to differing and possibly incompatible viewpoints.	0.75
RAM_S8	People speak from their own perspective, which is shaped by their unique experiences.	0.65
RAM_S9	It is important to understand differing viewpoints by appreciating the ways people's ways of life differ.	0.65
RAM_S14	It is important to consider the viewpoints of others from the perspective of their respective ways of life.	0.64

Table 4 Structural Equation Fit Indices From Independence, Hypothesized, and Alternative Models

Model		*df*	Chi-square	CFI	RMSEA	90% CI for RMSEA
Independence (null) model		78	1345.00			
Hypothesized model 1	Three treatment factors of relativism	59	112.11	0.96	0.05	.04-.07
Alternative models						
2	One treatment factor of situational relativism	60	118.61	0.95	0.06	.04-.07
3	One treatment factor of moral relativism	61	197.04	0.89	0.08	.07-.10
4	One treatment factor of epistemological relativism	61	140.04	0.94	0.06	.05-.08
5	Two treatment factors of situational and moral relativism	62	187.42	0.90	0.08	.07-.09
6	Two treatment factors of moral and epistemological relativism	62	200.09	0.90	0.08	.07-.10
7	Two treatment factors of situational and epistemological relativism	62	250.67	0.85	0.1	.08-.11

Table 5 Exploratory Regression Models with NFC, IH, and PT

	Model 1		Model 2	
Variable	*B* (SE)	*t*	*B* (SE)	*t*
Constant	4.00 (.54)	7.39	5.29 (.59)***	8.99
Need for Closure	0.12 (.07)	1.71	0.04 (.07)	0.54
Intellectual Humility	0.07 (.07)	1.04	0.01 (.06)	0.23
Perspective Taking	-0.07 (.06)	-1.19	-0.00 (.06)	-0.17
Political Ideology	-0.03 (.02)	-1.71	-0.04 (.02)*	-2.07
RAME (epistemological)			-0.17 (.05)***	-3.18
RAMM (moral)			-0.16 (.04)***	-4.04
RAMS (situational)			0.12 (.06)*	1.94
Model Summary				
R^2	0.03**		0.12***	
F (*df*)	3.26	(4, 323)	7.21	(7, 323)

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 6 Multiple Regression Models Testing for Interactions with Non-Latent RAM Variables

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
Variable	*B* (SE)	*t*	*B* (SE)	*t*	*B* (SE)	*t*
Constant	5.31 (.27)***	19.74	6.26 (1.28)***	4.88	5.93 (4.91)	1.21
RAME (epistemological)	-0.21 (.05)***	-4.28	-0.33 (.29)	-1.15	0.26 (1.03)	-0.25
RAMM (moral)	-0.15 (.04)***	-4.13	-0.10 (.22)	-0.44	-0.03 (1.07)	-0.02
RAMS (situational)	0.14 (.06)**	2.40	-0.15 (.27)	-0.55	-0.09 (.93)	-0.09
RAMS x RAME			0.04 (.05)	0.91	0.03 (.19)	0.17
RAMS x RAMM			0.01 (.04)	0.34	0.00 (.20)	0.00
RAME x RAMM			-0.03 (.04)	-0.67	-0.04 (.22)	-0.19
RAMM x RAME x RAMS					0.00 (.04)	0.07
Model Summary						
R^2	0.12***		0.12***		0.12***	
F (*df*)	16.14	(3, 326)	8.23	(6, 326)	7.03	(7, 326)

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Appendix B Figures

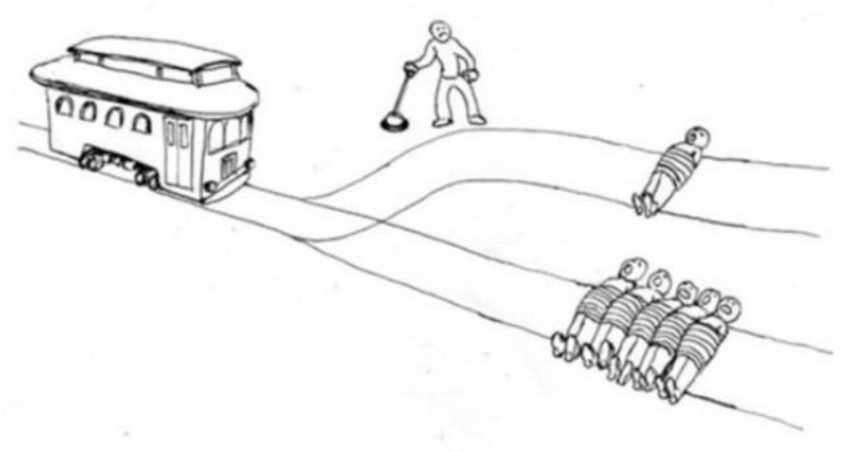

Figure 1 Example of the Trolley Problem

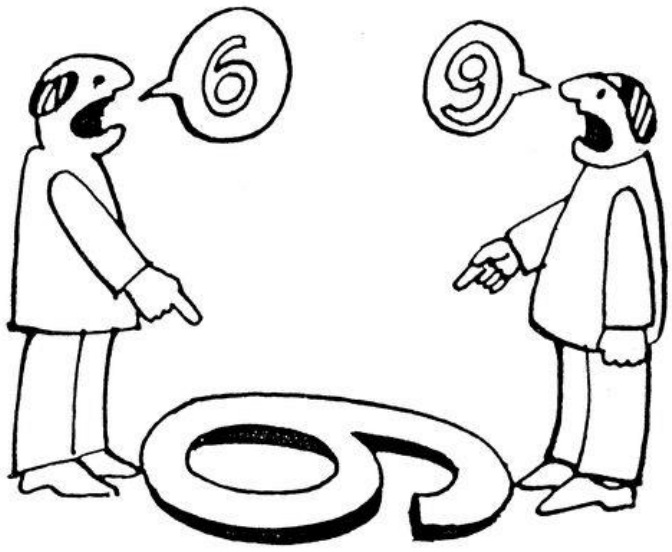

Figure 2 Example of Differing Knowledge Bases

Figure 3 Example of Contextual Differences

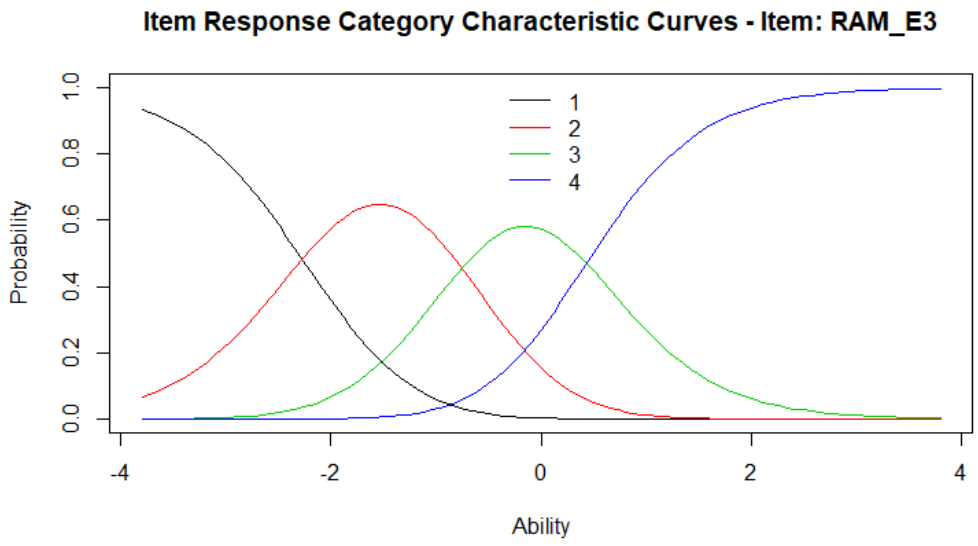

Figure 4 Item Characteristic Curve for RAM_E3

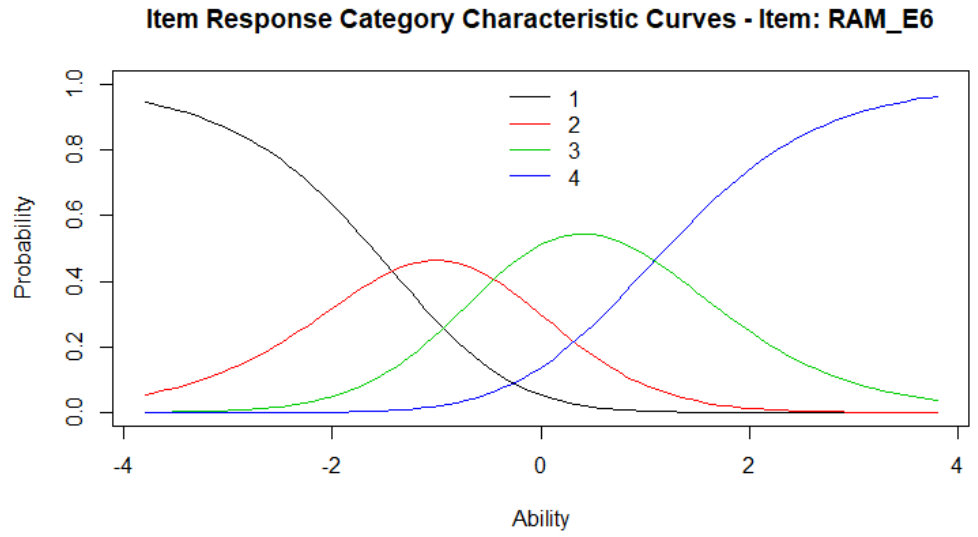

Figure 5 Item Characteristic Curve for RAM_E6

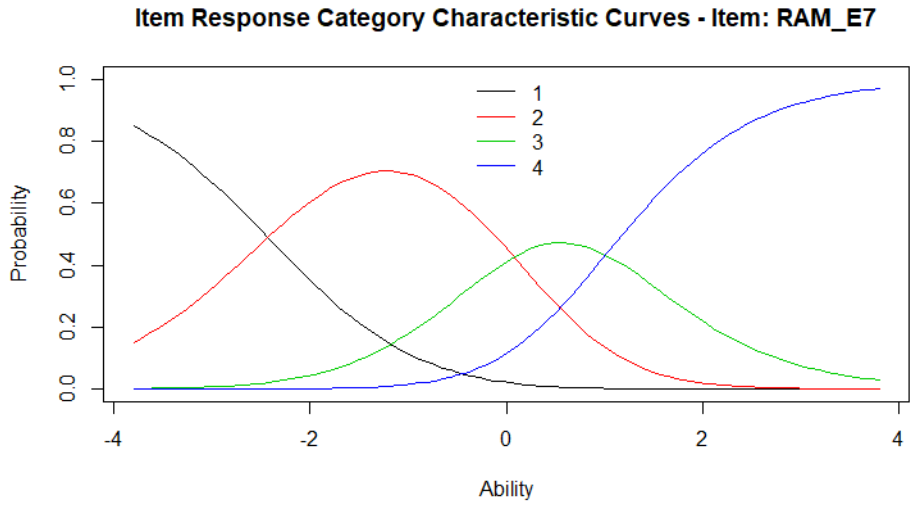

Figure 6 Item Characteristic Curve for RAM_E7

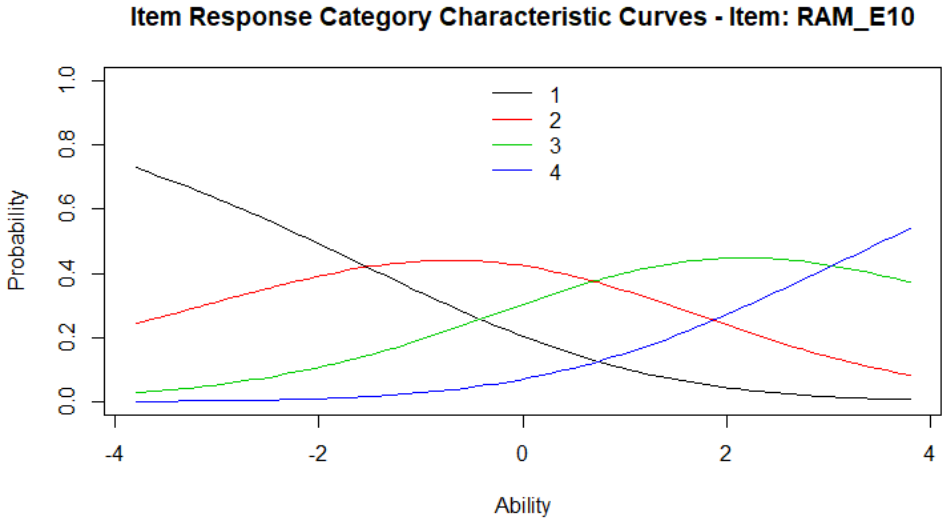

Figure 7 Item Characteristic Curve for RAM_E10

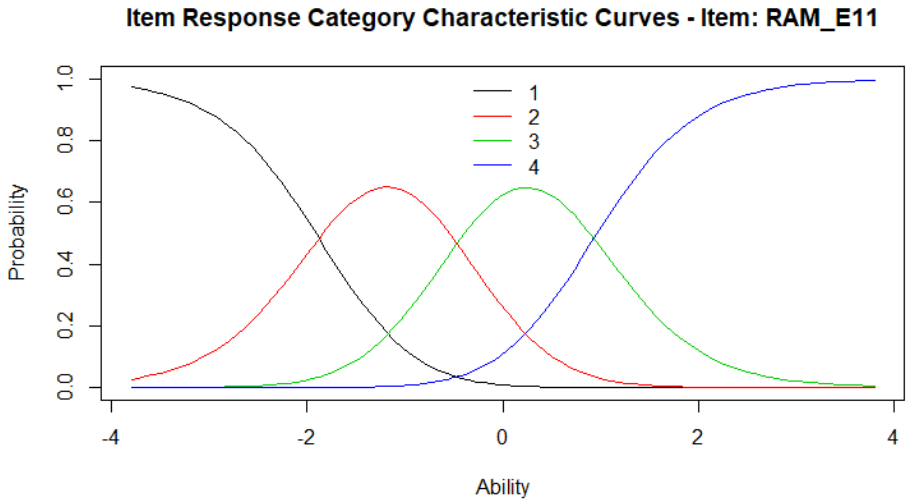

Figure 8 Item Characteristic Curve for RAM_E11

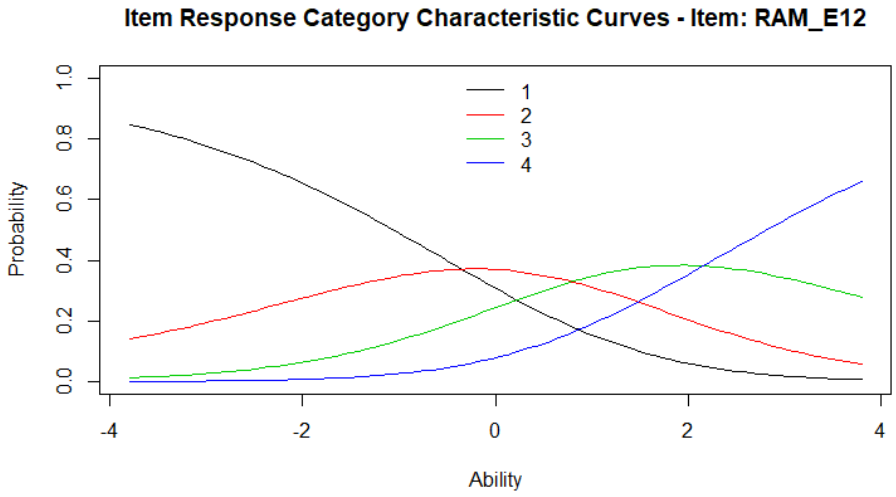

Figure 9 Item Characteristic Curve for RAM_E12

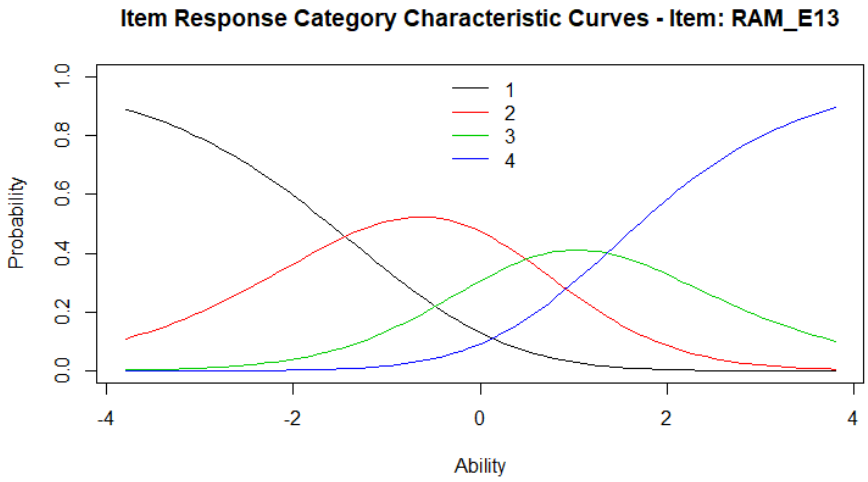

Figure 10 Item Characteristic Curve for RAM_E13

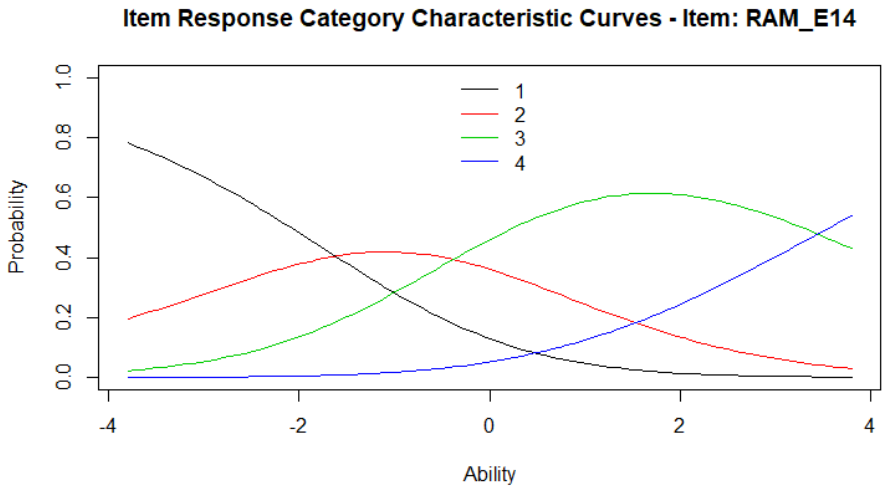

Figure 11 Item Characteristic Curve for RAM_E14

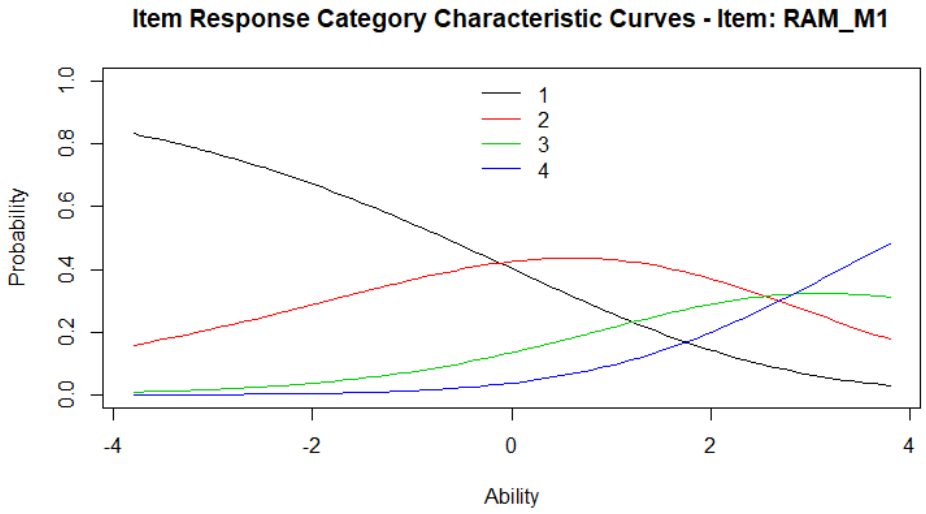

Figure 12 Item Characteristic Curve for RAM_M1

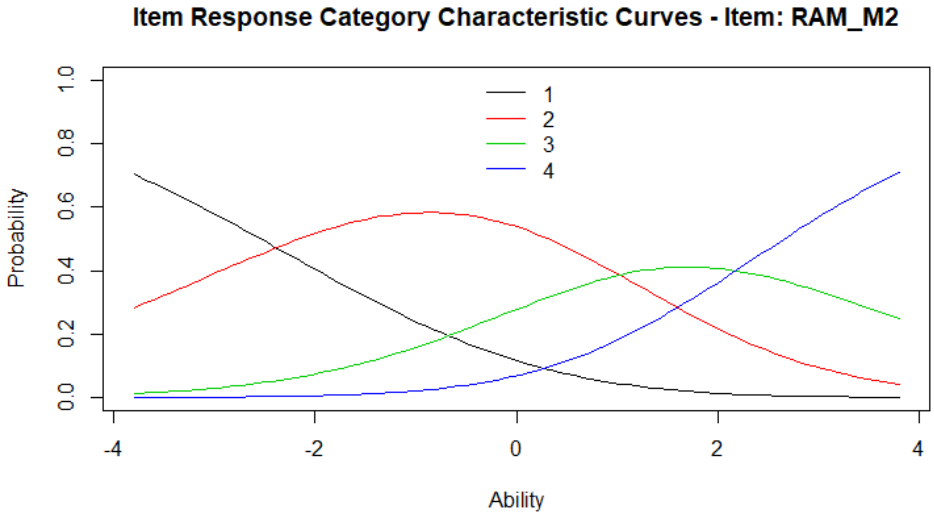

Figure 13 Item Characteristic Curve for RAM_M2

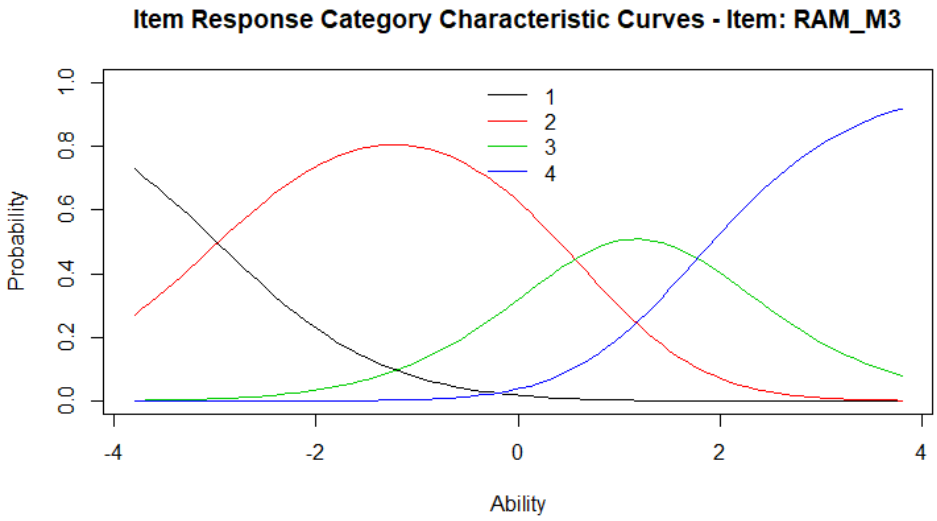

Figure 14 Item Characteristic Curve for RAM_M3

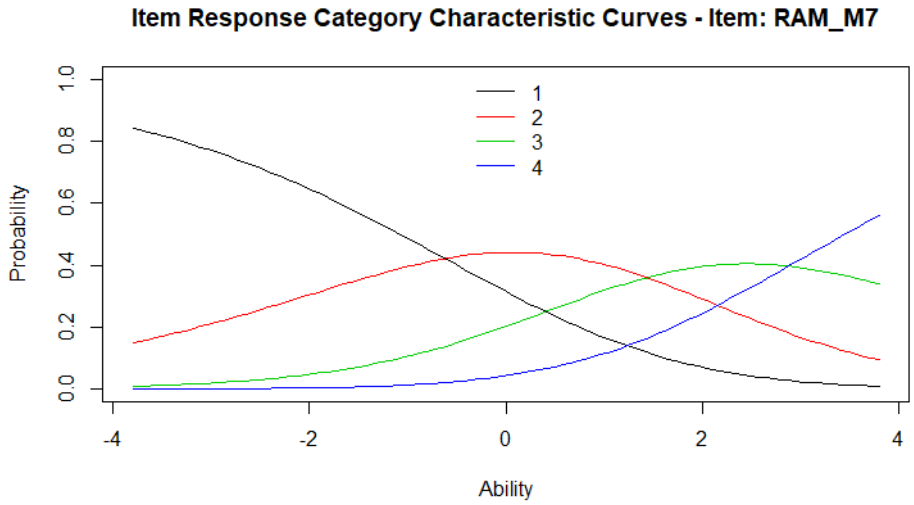

Figure 15 Item Characteristic Curve for RAM_M7

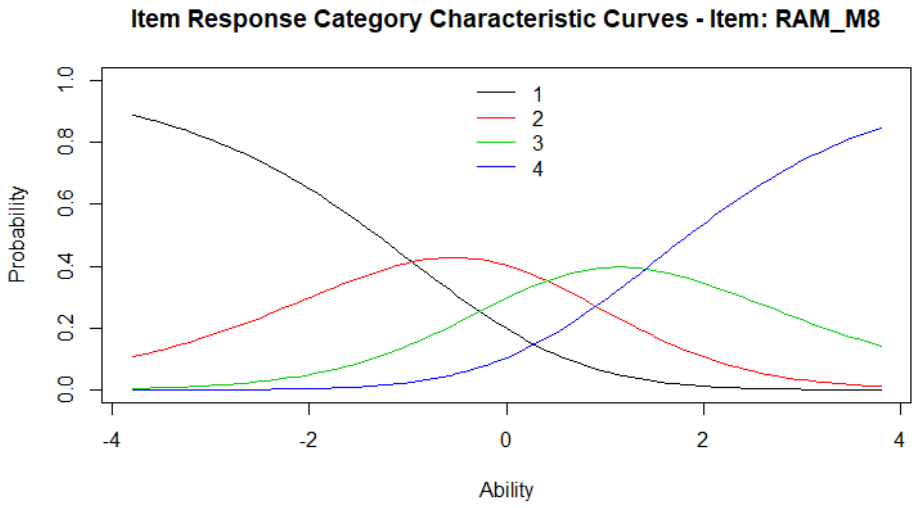

Figure 16 Item Characteristic Curve for RAM_M8

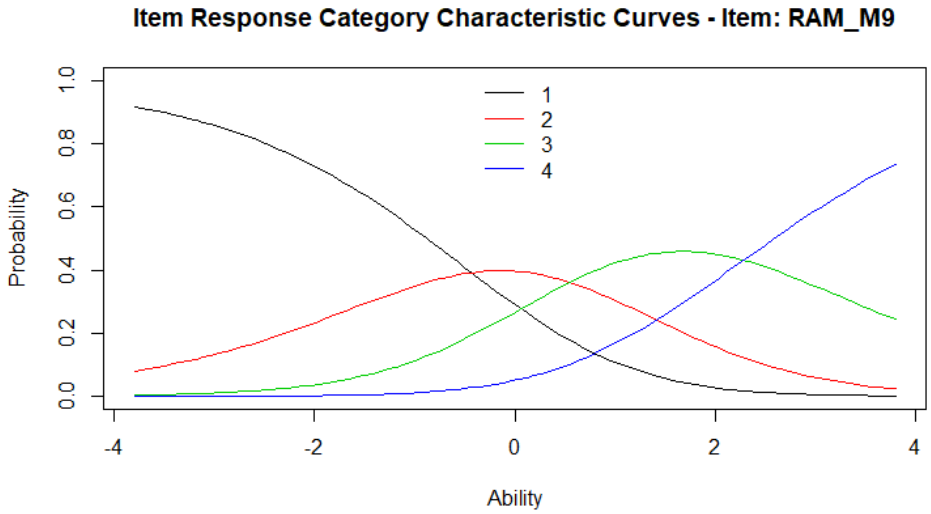

Figure 17 Item Characteristic Curve for RAM_M9

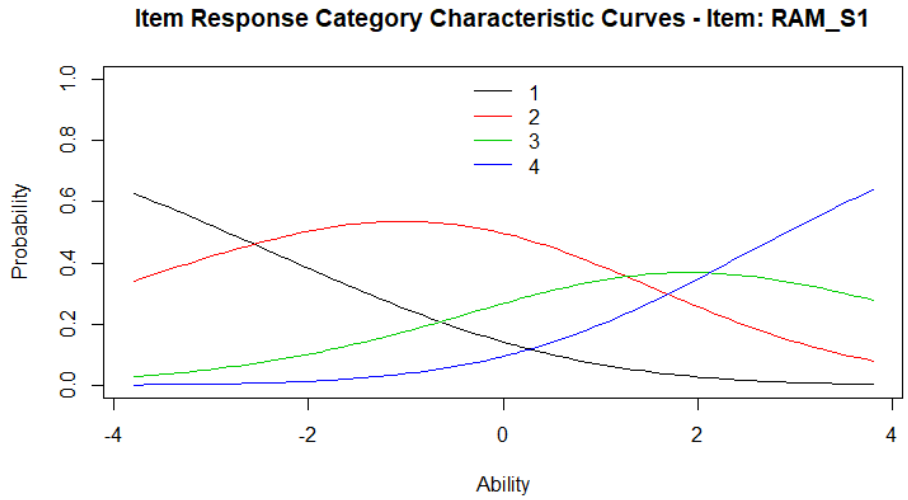

Figure 18 Item Characteristic Curve for RAM_S1

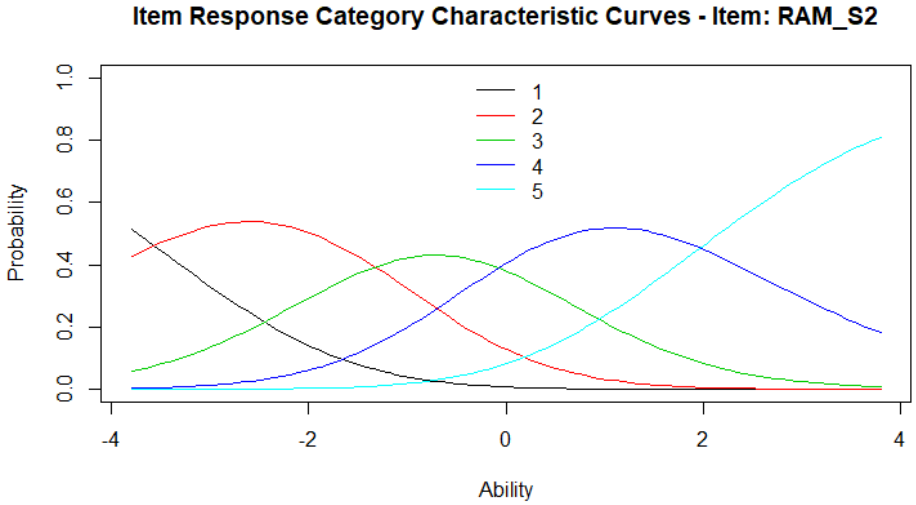

Figure 19 Item Characteristic Curve for RAM_S2

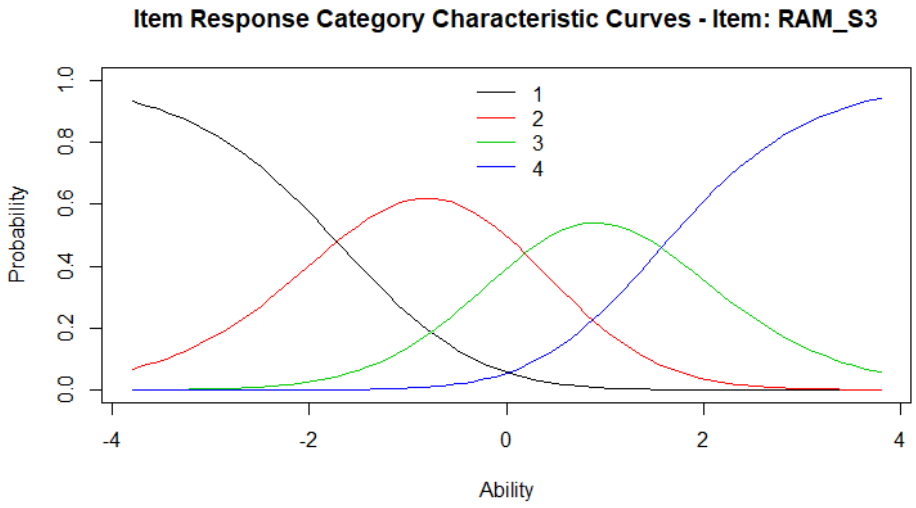

Figure 20 Item Characteristic Curve for RAM_S3

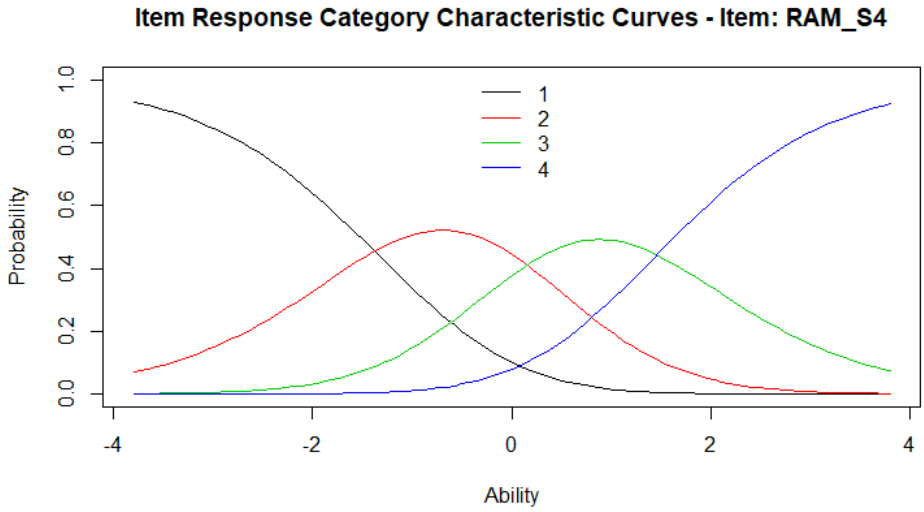

Figure 21 Item Characteristic Curve for RAM_S4

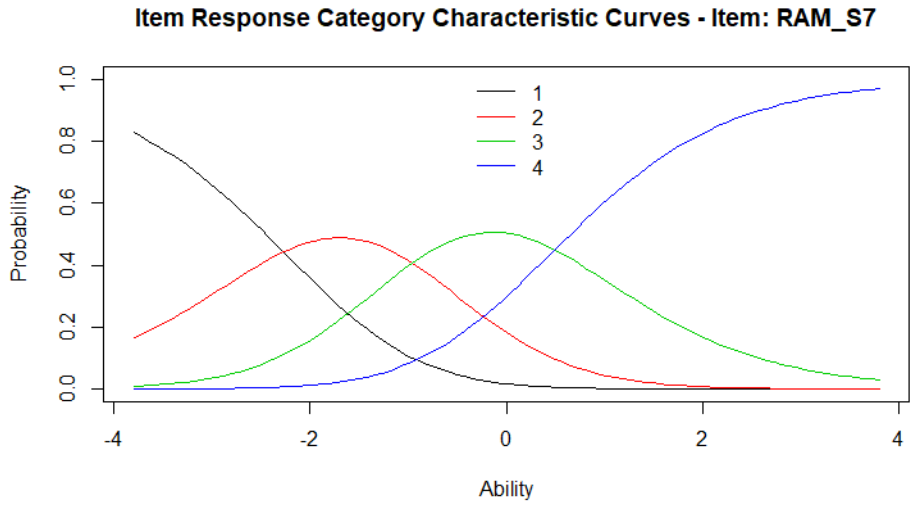

Figure 22 Item Characteristic Curve for RAM_S7

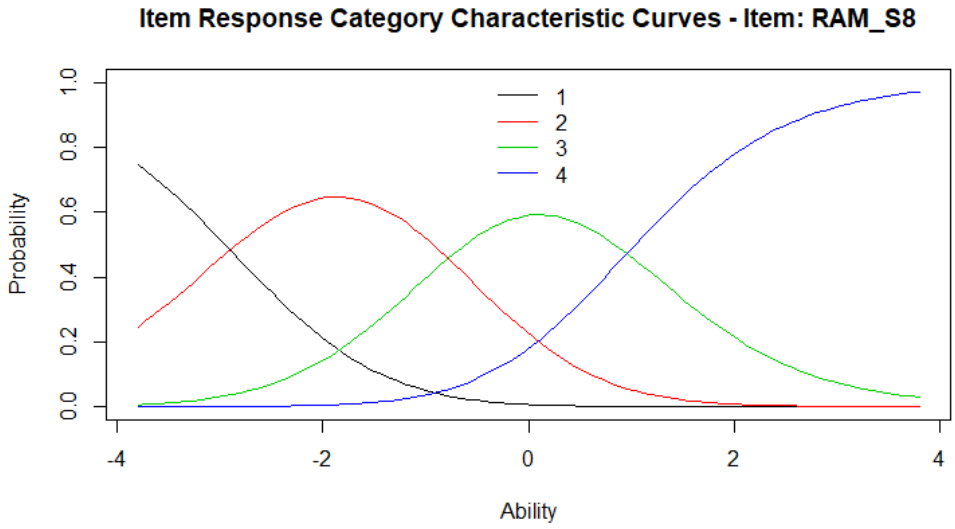

Figure 23 Item Characteristic Curve for RAM_S8

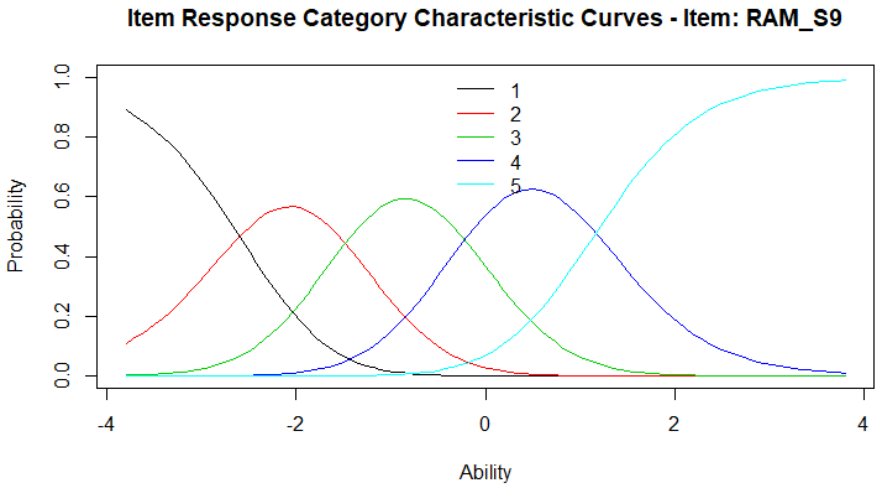

Figure 24 Item Characteristic Curve for RAM_S9

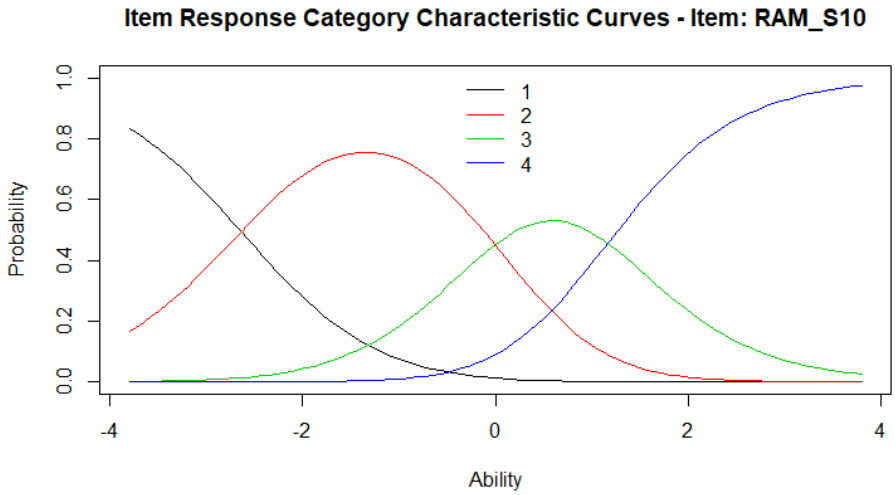

Figure 25 Item Characteristic Curve for RAM_S10

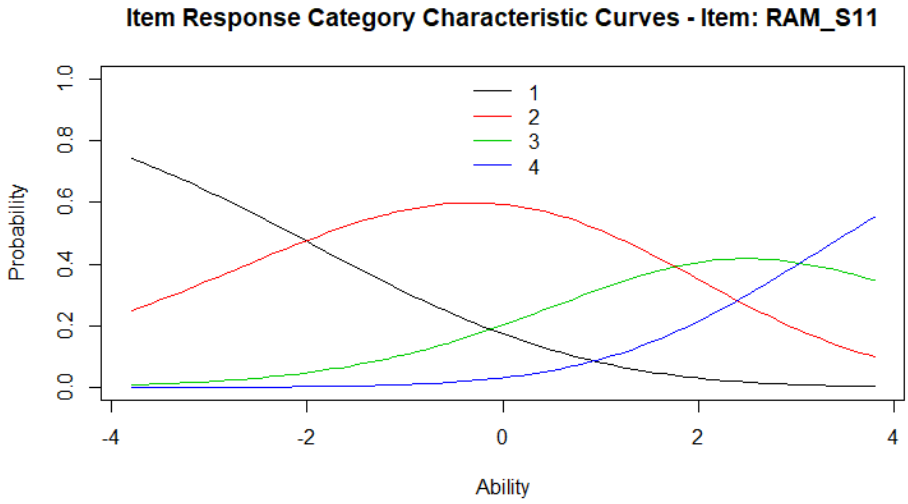

Figure 26 Item Characteristic Curve for RAM_S11

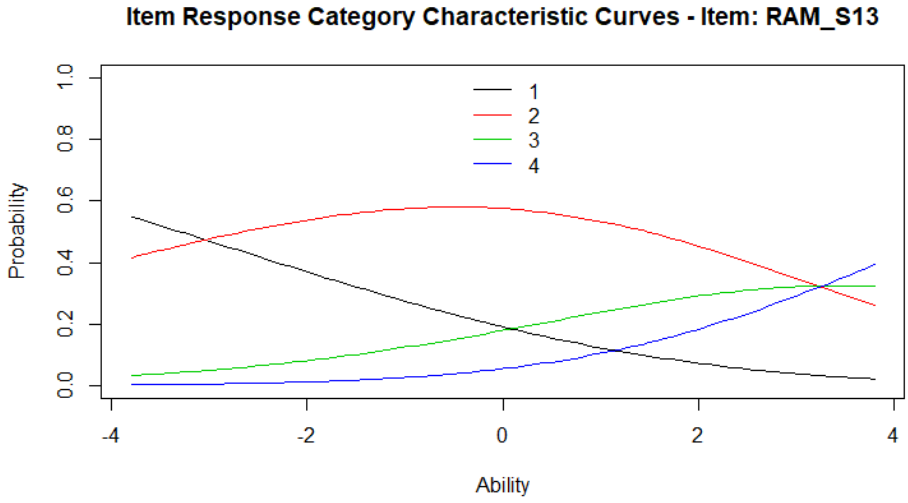

Figure 27 Item Characteristic Curve for RAM_S13

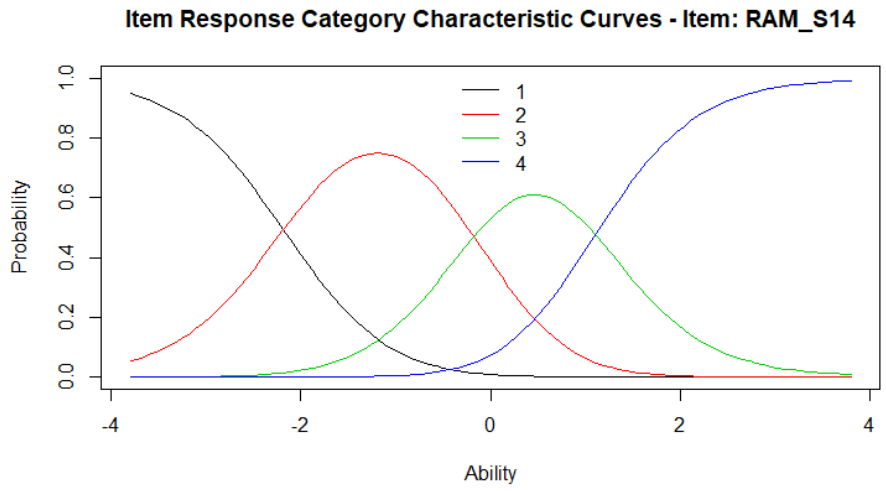

Figure 28 Item Characteristic Curve for RAM_S14

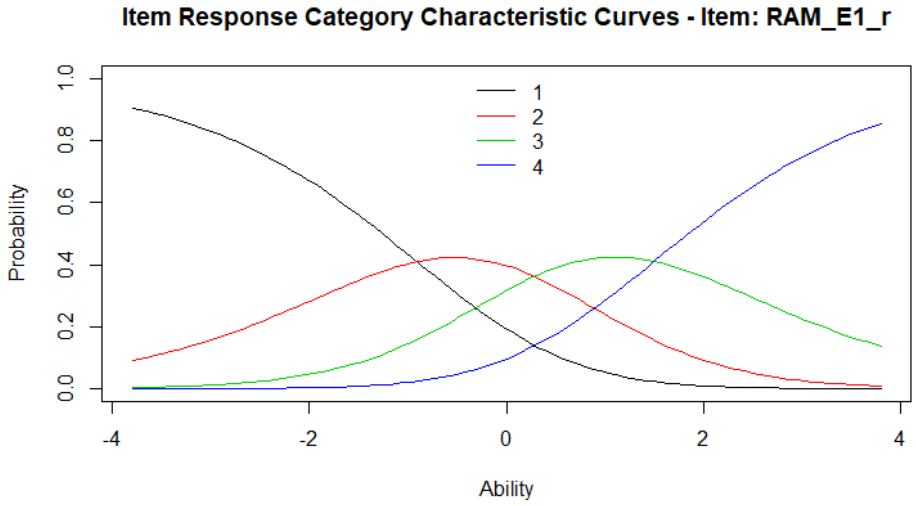

Figure 29 Item Characteristic Curve for RAM_E1_r

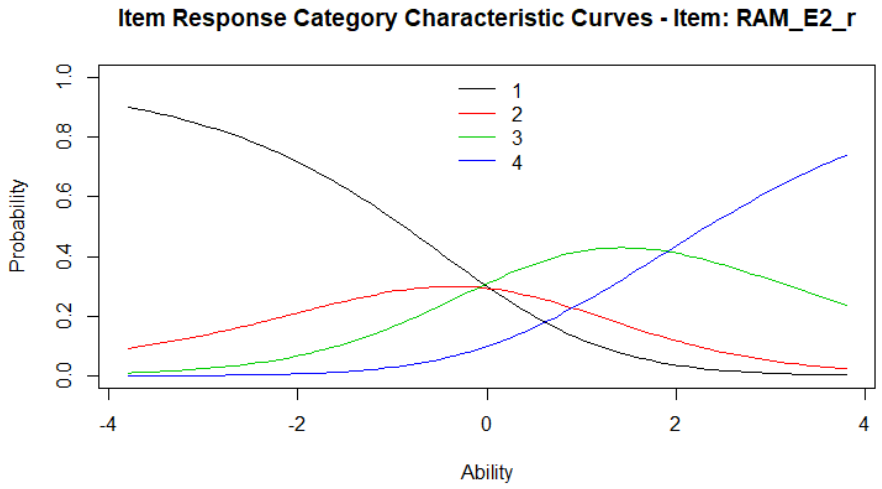

Figure 30 Item Characteristic Curve for RAM_E2_r

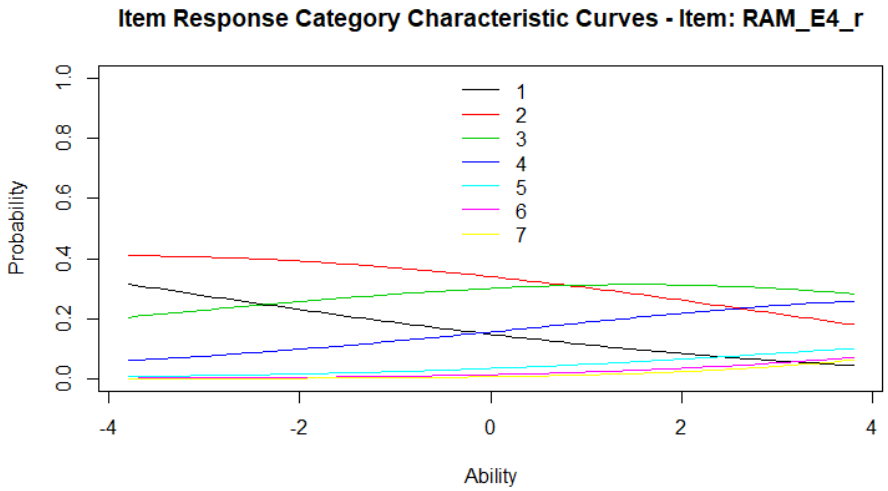

Figure 31 Item Characteristic Curve for RAM_E4_r

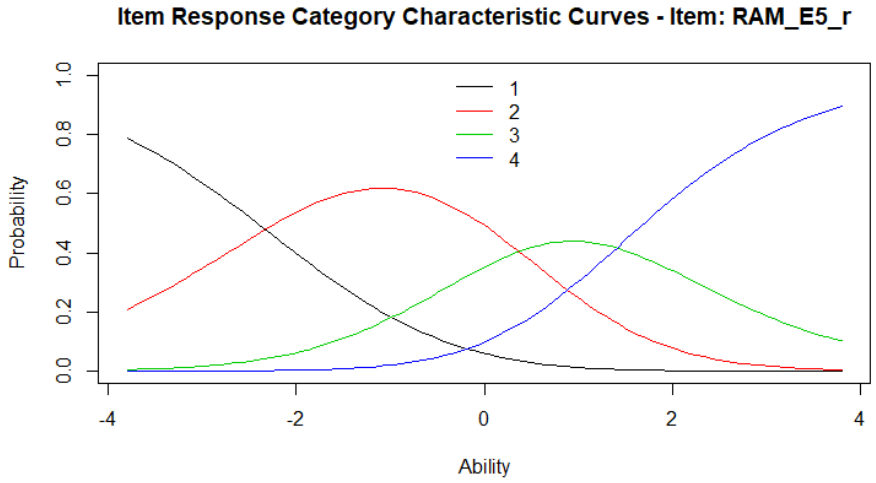

Figure 32 Item Characteristic Curve for RAM_E5_r

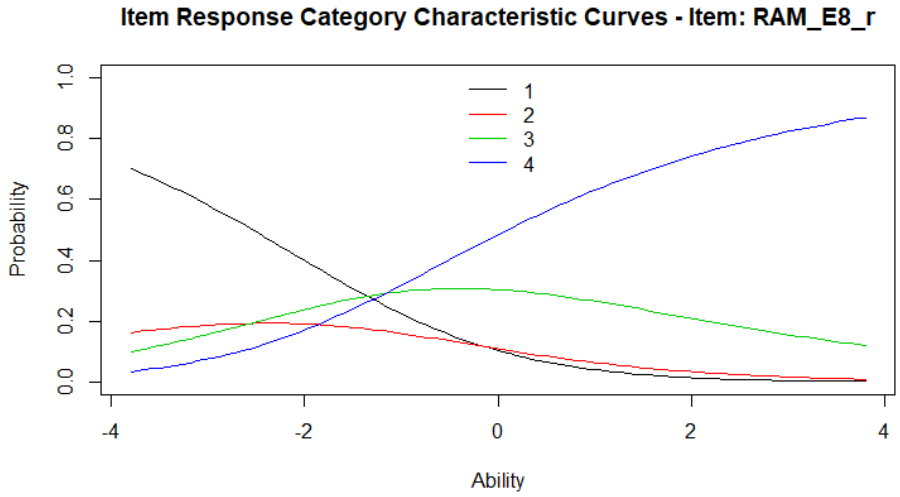

Figure 33 Item Characteristic Curve for RAM_E8_r

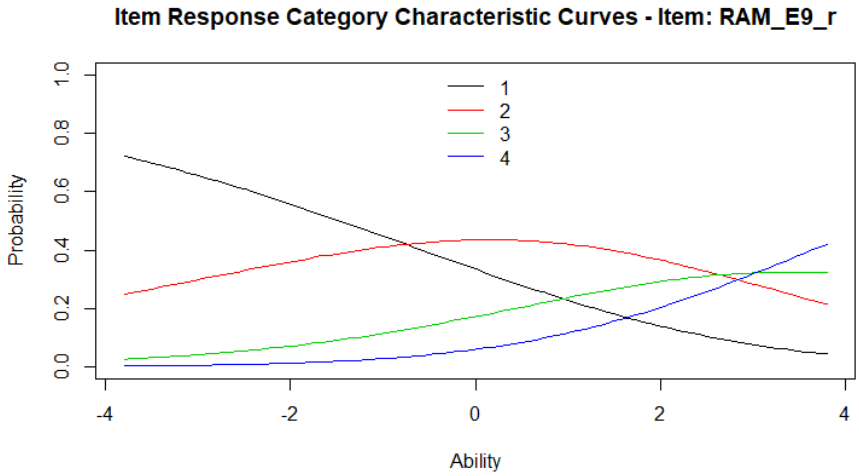

Figure 34 Item Characteristic Curve for RAM_E9_r

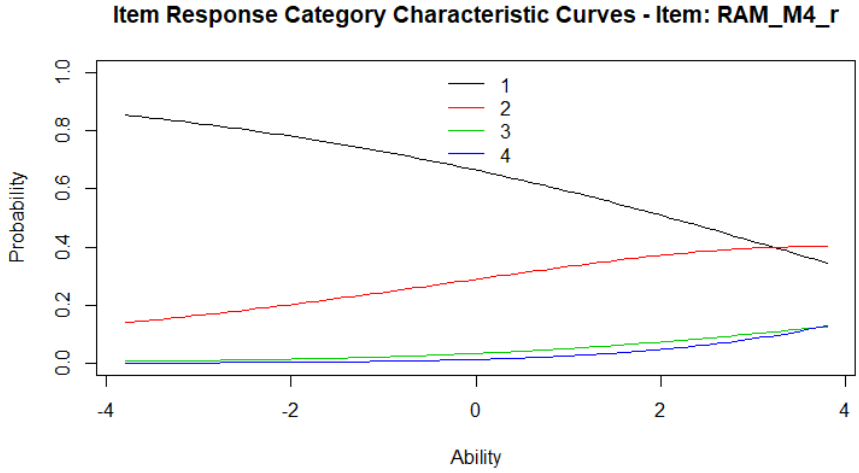

Figure 35 Item Characteristic Curve for RAM_M4_r

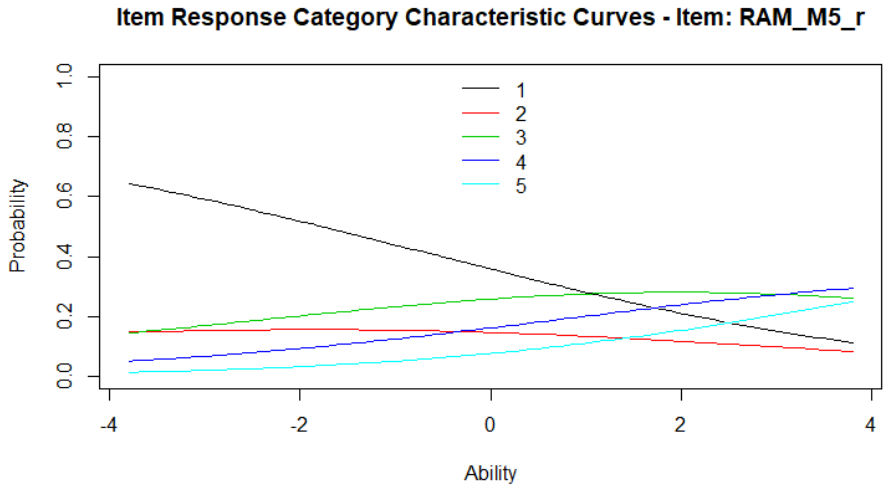

Figure 36 Item Characteristic Curve for RAM_M5_r

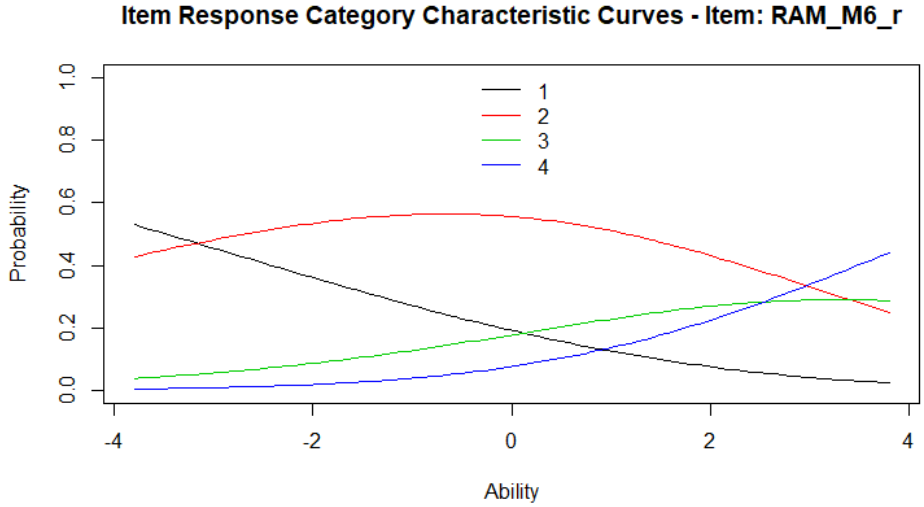

Figure 37 Item Characteristic Curve for RAM_M6_r

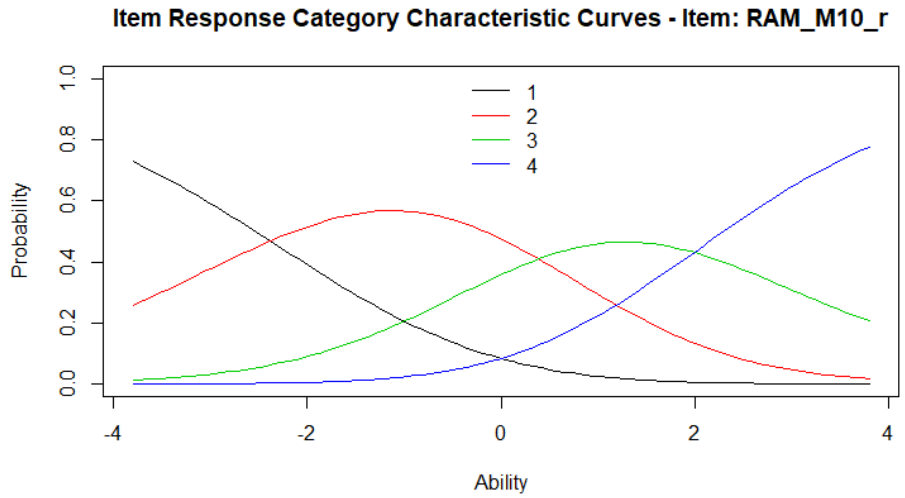

Figure 38 Item Characteristic Curve for RAM_M10_r

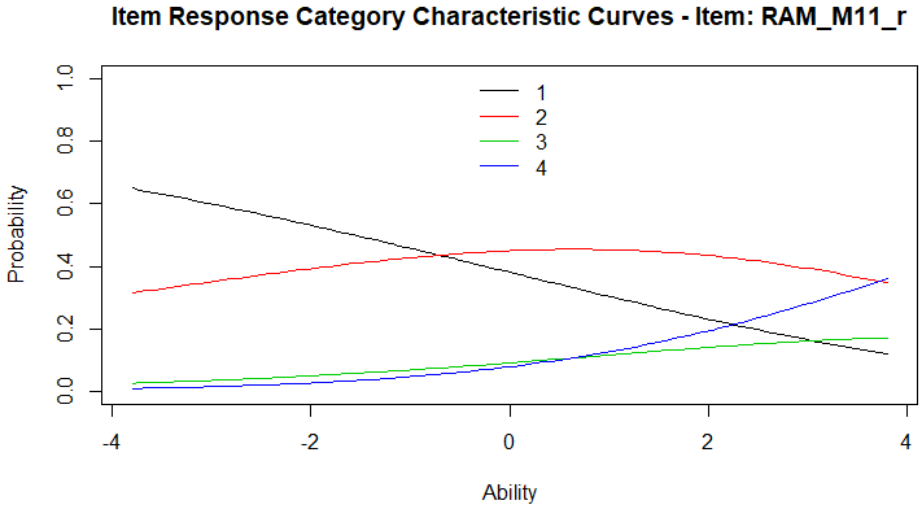

Figure 39 Item Characteristic Curve for RAM_M11_r

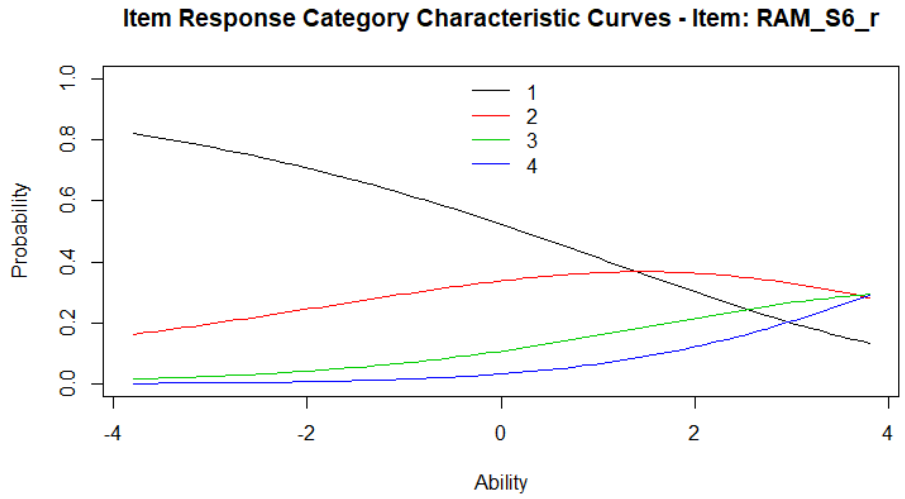

Figure 40 Item Characteristic Curve for RAM_S6_r

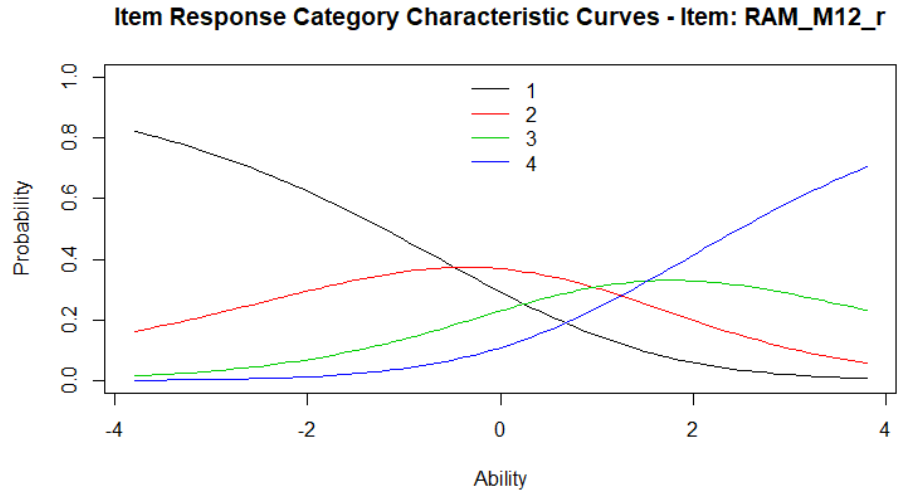

Figure 41 Item Characteristic Curve for RAM_M12_r

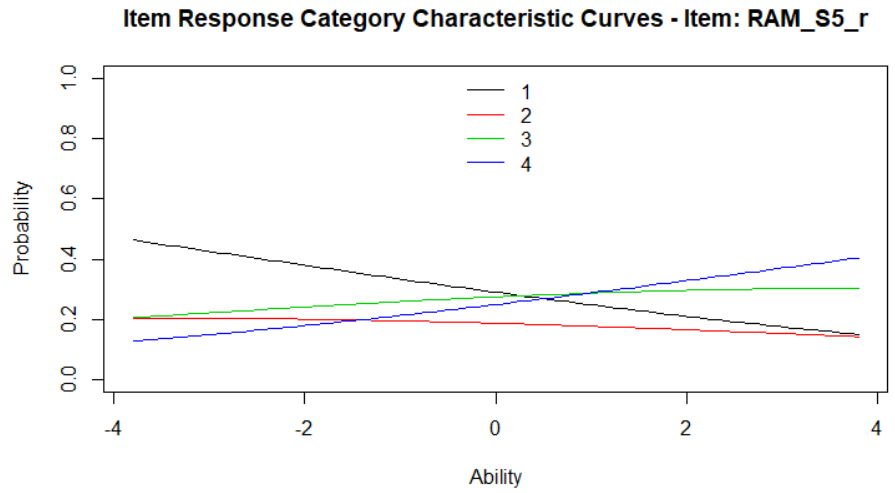

Figure 42 Item Characteristic Curve for RAM_S5_r

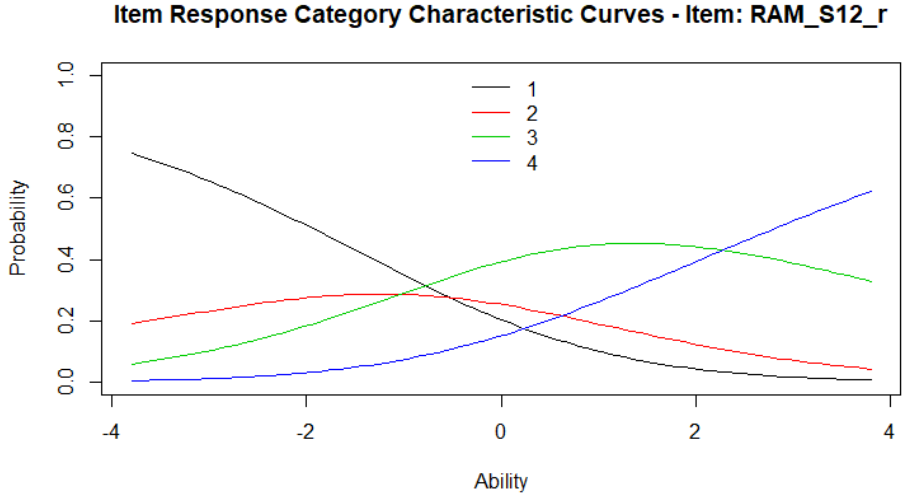

Figure 43 Item Characteristic Curve for RAM_S12_r

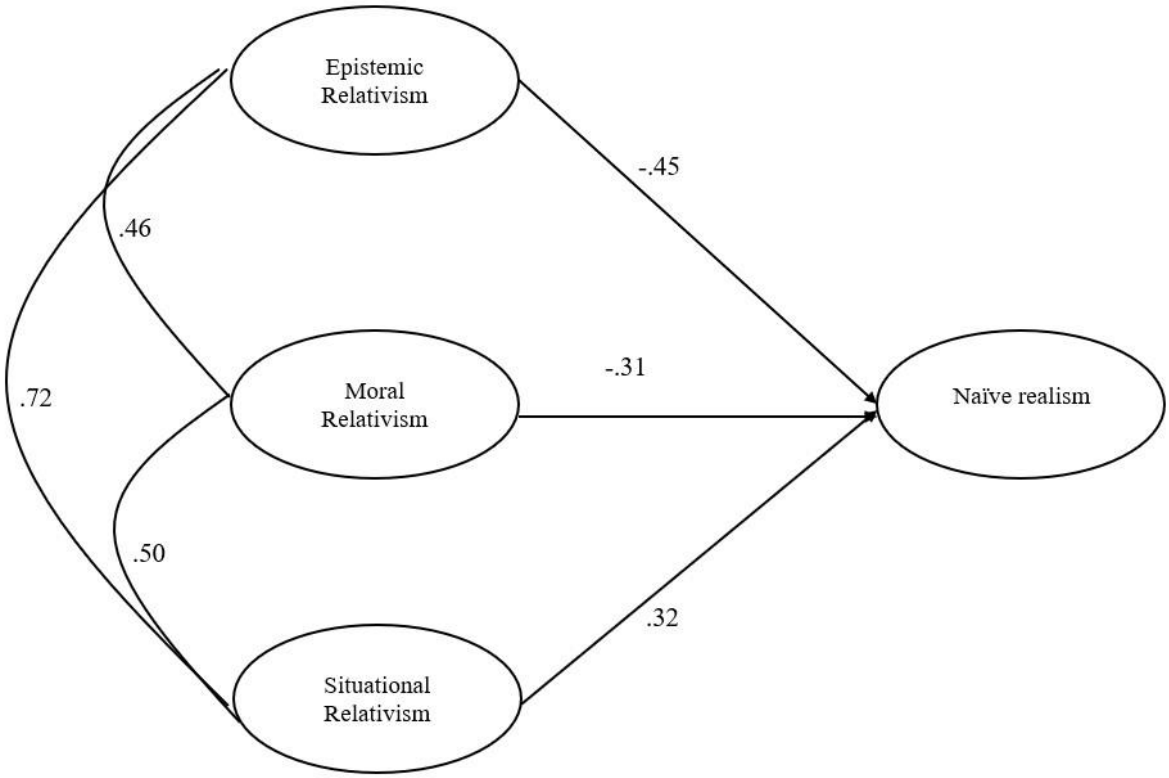

Figure 44 Hypothesized Model: Three Treatment Factors of Relativism Predicting Naïve Realism

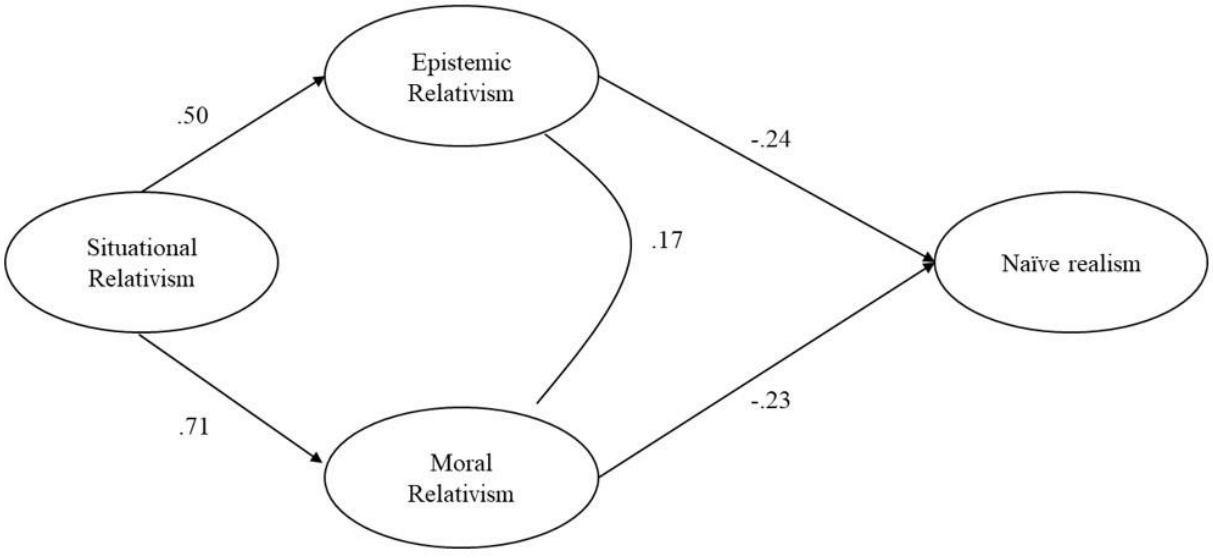

Figure 45 Alternative Model: One Treatment Factor of Situational Relativism Predicting Naïve Realism

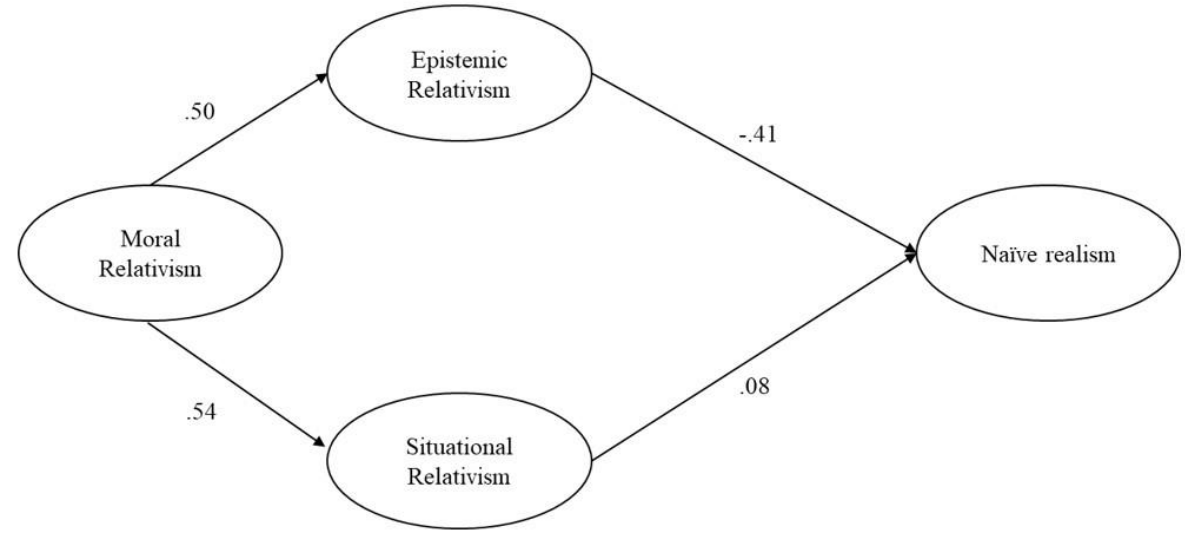

Figure 46 Alternative Model: One Treatment Factor of Moral Relativism Predicting Naïve Realism

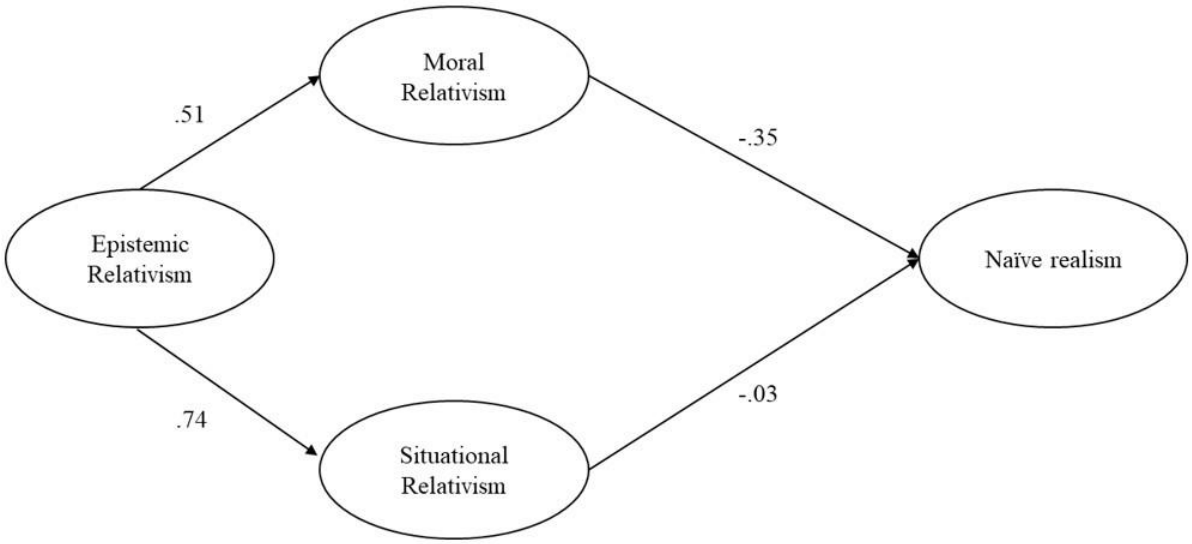

Figure 47 Alternative Model: One Treatment Factor of Epistemic Relativism Predicting Naïve Realism

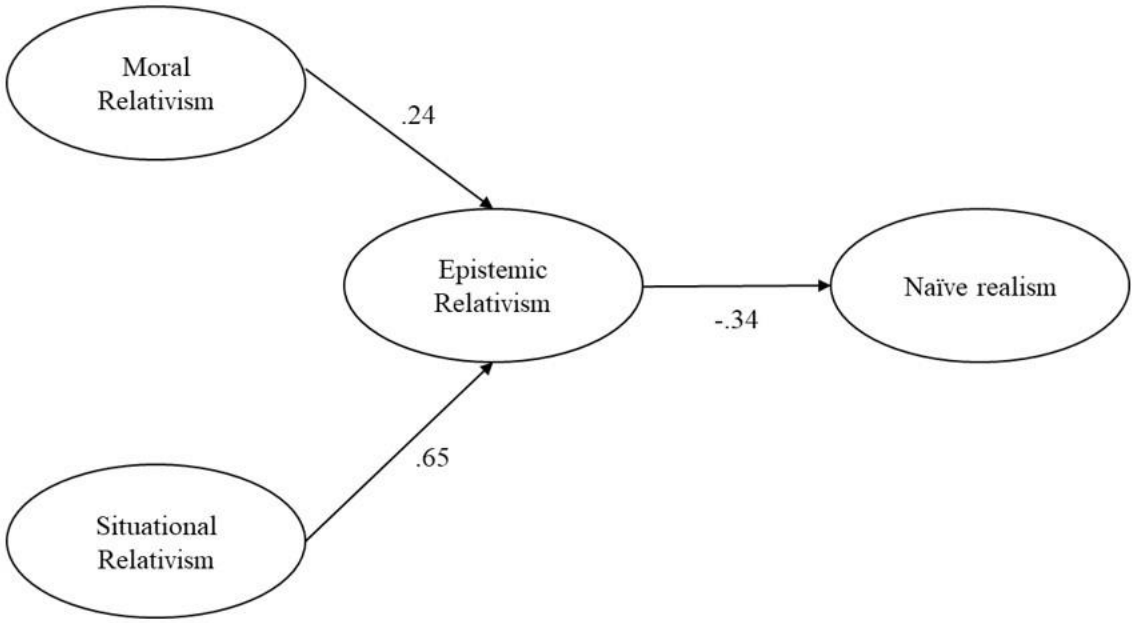

Figure 48 Alternative Model: Two Treatment Factors of Moral and Situational Relativism Predicting Naïve Realism

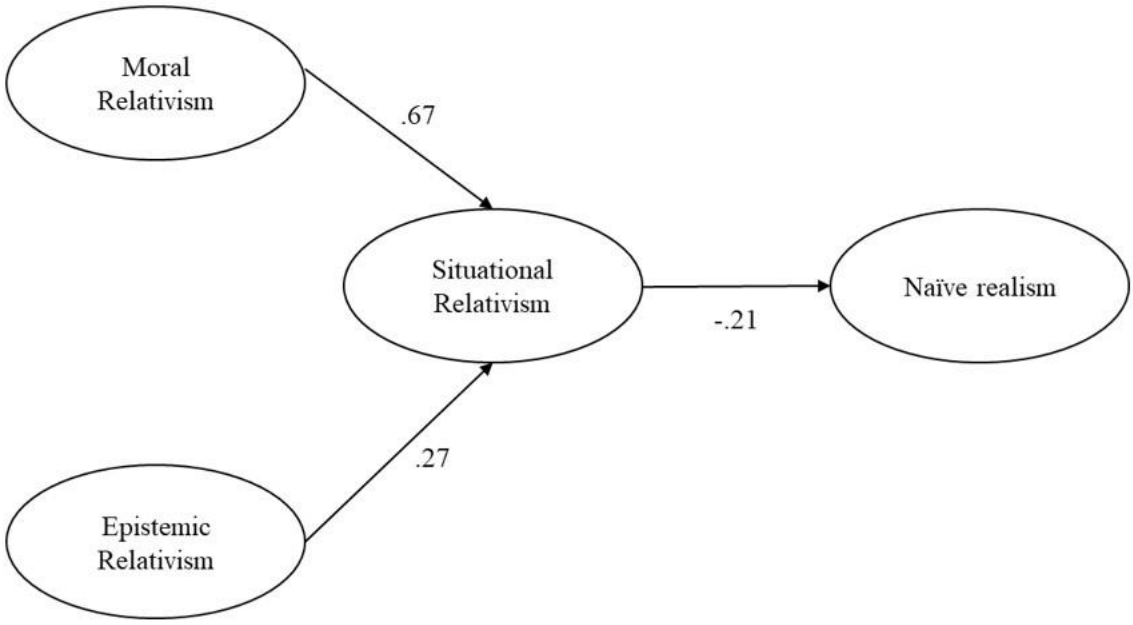

Figure 49 Alternative Model: Two Treatment Factors of Moral and Epistemic Relativism Predicting Naïve Realism

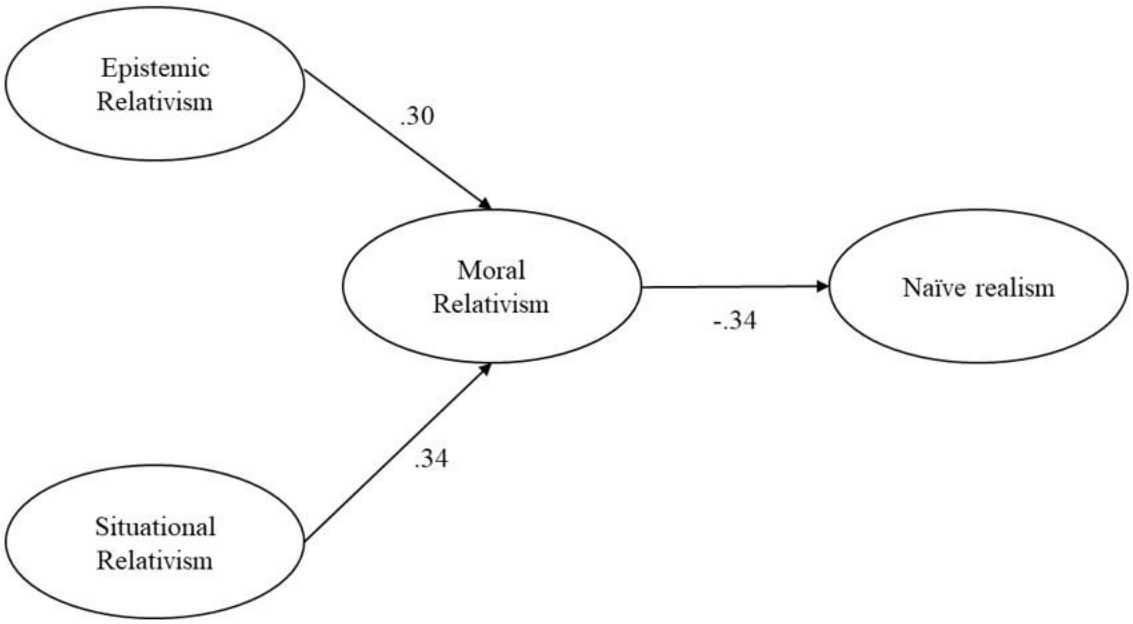

Figure 50 Alternative Model: Two Treatment Factors of Epistemic and Situational Relativism Predicting Naïve Realism

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